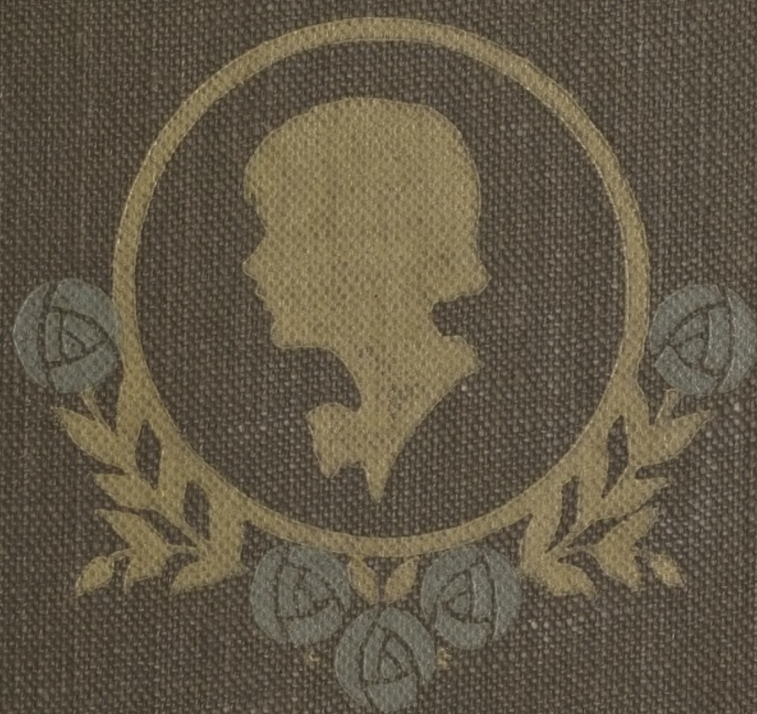


PHILIPPA'S FORTUNE



MARGARITA SPALDING GERRY



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PHILIPPA'S FORTUNE



BOOKS BY
MARGARITA SPALDING GERRY

PHILIPPA'S FORTUNE
THE TOY-SHOP
THE FLOWERS

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK
ESTABLISHED 1817

PHILIPPA'S FORTUNE

By

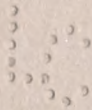
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Author of

"THE FLOWERS" "THE TOY SHOP" ETC.



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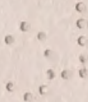
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CHAPTER I

"I BELIEVE I'd know it was Friday evening even if I didn't know it."

Philippa stopped stirring the fudge long enough to make this observation.

Anne laughed with comfortable superiority.

"That's what people call an Irish bull, isn't it? How absurd you can be, Philippa! Just what did you mean to say?"

"I understand what Philippa means," Virginia said, eagerly. "There are lots of things you know like that. That's why I can say some things best in music—"

Philippa's eyes snapped.

"Say it in music, then. The fudge isn't ready. I'd like to see whether you can make Anne believe anything she doesn't see."

A little languidly Virginia went to the piano. A decided enough tone would usually start her. She was a slender, delicate girl of

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thirteen, with beautiful, absent eyes. Her hands once on the keys, however, her face became colorful and eager. Gropingly at first, then with gathering confidence, she improvised. When her hands were still Anne was the first to speak:

"That sounded very well, Virginia, but I didn't catch any air that I can hum. Perhaps if you try again you can make one up—"

"Now *you're* absurd!" Philippa was almost bursting with her eagerness to speak. "You've got a blind spot somewhere. Doesn't that rambling, happy kind of melody make you *feel*—start thoughts, at least?"

Anne carefully picked up a dropped stitch and changed needles before she answered.

"I don't know that it does. It just made me feel comfortable and a little drowsy, if that's what you mean. It didn't seem to have much beginning or end."

"Gosh! Anne, you *do* bore me sometimes."

"'Gosh' is a very unladylike expression, and you're batting your eyes again, Philippa. I know your mother wants you to stop that. It's a nervous habit."

"Now wouldn't that jar you?" Philippa's dramatic wave of the wooden spoon came dangerously near scattering drops of liquid

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chocolate all over the rug. She had turned to Virginia as the kindred soul who could understand. Her emotion was a perfectly sincere one, but the vivid child could never quite avoid a shade of the unconsciously effective. "Why can't you ever be interested in the really important thing, Anne? What if I do bat my eyes? Why, it's just because there isn't any beginning or end to it that Virginia's music *is* like Friday night. It's the one night in the week when you don't have to think about time—how long you take to do things and when you have to go to bed. You can just—just float along and feel it's endless. And there were so many other things in that nice, rippling, murmuring sing-song—"

"What things?"

"Well, didn't it make you feel happy and comfortable and—and—luxurious—and expecting fun to-morrow? And you're going to be happy always—'n' everything—never going to be fussed about lessons—'n' probably we'll find chestnuts open in Beecher's grove. Didn't you think all those things, Virginia?"

Virginia's eyes were dreamy soft, not electrically bright like Philippa's.

"I don't know. I felt happy. But—but

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I can't just exactly pick the way I feel all to pieces the way you can."

"That fudge smells good, anyway." Anne had an elderly, indulgent air as she tried to bring herself down to the level of the two childish ones. She often felt they were both quite mad, but still she could never be entirely comfortable to be left outside even the most incomprehensible flight.

Philippa sighed—an eloquently effective sigh.

"Look here, Anne." She spoke in an unconscious imitation of the patient tone Miss Graham, the new eighth-grade teacher, used when she tried to convince hopelessly befogged beginners in algebra that there really was some sense in doing things with a and b and x. "When I say 'Friday night,' what color comes into your mind?"

"Why should any color come into my mind?"

"That isn't the point. What color does come?"

The amused but also slightly impatient Anne put down her knitting and closed her eyes. Experience had taught her there would be no peace until she yielded to Philippa's whim.

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"Red." She gave the verdict after a moment's conscientious research.

"*That's* the idea!" Philippa said, delightedly. "Unless it's just because that sweater you're knitting is red," she added a suspicious after-thought. "But it *is* red, mostly warm, soft, rich, *plushy* red. And it's golden brown, too, because you know that to-morrow morning the water in Klingle brook will be golden brown where it runs down the stone into the pool. And—"

"Philippa! Don't you think I'd better stir the fudge while you're talking?" came Anne's slightly exasperated voice. "It's getting ready to string; I can tell from the way it looks. Next thing you know it 'll grain—or burn."

The crisis was too evidently imminent to be disregarded. Philippa's red mouth was tightly compressed and her brown eyes very serious as she tested a teaspoonful of the boiling mass in a cup of cold water. The other girls watched her. Somehow one always did watch Philippa. If she herself was interested, eyes turned toward her. Sometimes Anne struggled against the impulse. She liked to be the center of things herself.

"Take care, Philippa," she interjected now,

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warningly. "I always—" She didn't finish her sentence, but, instead, tried to make up her mind whether Philippa really was pretty or not.

"Her mouth is too big," she thought, critically. "No, she isn't pretty really. But—my, but her eyes are bright! And her cheeks are such a lovely deep pink. She must be pretty. No. She's too big. She's almost fat. I believe I'll think up a descriptive paragraph about her. Miss Graham is always springing something like that on us and I never know what to write about. Philippa," she said, aloud.

"Yes, what is it, Anne?"

"May I have a pencil and some paper? There is something I want to write down."

"All right. In the drawer of the library table," Philippa mumbled, her eyes on the fudge.

So Anne, her eyes piercingly on her friend, wrote this paragraph, which, years afterward, she came across and read, rather wondering at her own childish insight:

"My friend is one of those persons that you always have to have very decided opinions about. Sometimes you think she is the nicest girl you know and sometimes you think

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you never want to speak to her again. She is especially so about her looks. You always have to look at her. Sometimes you think she is prettier than anyone else, and sometimes you are sure she isn't the least bit pretty. You have to decide all over again every time. So I thought I would write down how she looks and see if I could tell whether she is pretty or not when I saw it written. I don't know exactly what 'regular features' means, but if it means the kind of features you would expect, hers are not that. When you look at her nose it isn't a bit like the Greek ones they make us draw, and her mouth isn't a bit small, and she wears bangs because her mother thinks her forehead is too high. And none of my favorite characters in books have as fat cheeks as she has. But somehow all her features seem to go together and *I* like her nose. It's kind of short and decided and it wouldn't be half as pretty as it is if it was perfectly straight. And I don't really believe that having her mouth smaller would make her prettier. It's usually very red. When she laughs it curls up at the corners in a nice way over her white teeth, and, with the dimple in her chin and one just at the side of her mouth, it makes you feel all

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warmed up and happy and as if there was something fearfully funny and exciting that you were going to do the next minute. I don't know anything else to say about her except that she is tall for her age and stands straight and holds her head in a way that makes some of the girls think she is stuck up, but she isn't. She uses lots of words when she is talking that the rest of us don't, that makes her seemed conceited, but I don't think she is—very. Her hair is just dark brown and clipped, but it has curly ends and looks full of pep. Her hands are rather large, but she has nice long fingers that take hold as if they could do things. She—”

“*Now!*” This from Philippa interrupted Anne's writing. She folded the piece of paper hurriedly and put it in the pocket of her middy. The fudge was done. At just the right moment the chafing-dish was whisked off the little electric stove, the vanilla added, and the thickening mass vigorously beaten until it was spread in the buttered platter at the last possible moment that it could have been spread.

When the fudge was out on the window ledge, cooling, the three girls snuggled down in easy chairs and stretched their already

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warm toes out to the fire. Even Anne put down her knitting, although the sleeve she had promised herself to finish that evening was not nearly done. It was, somehow, a very precious moment to them all.

"That is such a satisfactory fire, to-night," said Philippa, with a happy sigh. "And isn't it fun that it's cold enough to make the fire comfortable?"

"I think it is very kind indeed of your father and mother to let us have your living room all to ourselves every Friday evening," Anne said, slowly. "I would love to have you at our house, only my mother is so afraid we'll muss things up that we don't have such a good time." Anne bent forward to poke the log as she spoke, and her color was higher than usual. The pink in her cheeks made her very pretty. Her small, neatly cut features and the silky black hair, parted and twisted into smooth coils over her ears and then turned up into heavy braided loops with wide ribbon bows, were usually a little too exact to be really pretty.

"Mine never can understand why I always come here every Friday night," Virginia said, a little plaintively. "She says I can have any kind of a supper or a party even every

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week at our house if I like. And father says, if I'll remind him he'll bring home the biggest box of candy he can find. But—somehow—it's just more natural to come here."

"Your father and mother are just as nice as they can be," Philippa said, with generous warmth. "And of course everything's much handsomer up at your house. And mother's always saying that every time she sees Anne's house she feels as if she must come home and go right to painting the woodwork in our reception room; it doesn't seem as if she could live without having our white paint look as if it were really enamelled. But—I suppose we're all just foolish about our house and our garden and our part of the brook just because it *is* ours. There really doesn't seem to be any other very good reason. But there is an awfully good reason about our being crazy about the living room. We all wanted it so much before father built it on; and every single thing in it we all thought about and dreamed about just ages before we got it. The money for our vacation trip last summer went into it, and my music lessons and Doreen's trip to California and Bayard's motor cycle. And most of the furniture we all went downtown to buy together. Why,

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we waited a whole week after we had the money for the last bookcase until Bayard could come home from college last summer. We knew he'd hate so to miss going with us. So perhaps that's why you like coming here. It's just as if you got all that's nicest in the whole Gale family all at once—"

Philippa jumped up. She made going to the window to get the candy an excuse to hide the moisture that had come into her eyes.

"I just hate the way I cry when I'm excited," she thought to herself, fiercely. "The other girls don't do it. It makes me feel like such a softy. And I'm not a softy—I'm *not*."

The embarrassing dew was quite gone from her eyes. It was certainly a very practical little girl who carefully piled the squares of velvety deliciousness on a plate and offered them to her guests. For a few minutes they enjoyed the candy in contented silence. Then Anne said:

"Funny how much better candy always tastes when you have made it yourself and smelled it cooking and waited for it to cool."

"I don't think it's funny. I think it's

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natural," Philippa said, decidedly. "That's true about everything—that the thing you've worked over you enjoy more, unless it's hats —" She began to laugh. The others joined in helplessly. They always had to when she laughed. "Oh, if you could have seen the hat Doreen tried to make!" She went off into peals of laughter. They had a mental vision before their eyes of a hat of surpassing absurdity—all the funny things they had ever observed in hats.

The laughter began with a little gurgle of sheer delight way down in Philippa's throat. Then it burst all bounds and gushed out—pealed out—unrestrained, perfect, delicious mirth.

"Now why should I laugh?" Anne recovered herself long enough to say this rebelliously. "I never saw Doreen's hat."

That started Philippa off again. They laughed until they were breathless, until the tears streamed from their eyes, until their sides ached.

"It looked as if some one had smashed it down over her eyes. The bow looked as if she had chopped it out of a piece of wood. The feather was so *sad*," Philippa gasped out as some new detail flashed before her vivid

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imagination. Philippa was sturdily built, robust as well as tall for her thirteen years. But her physical bulk always seemed forgotten at such moments; she was like some flashing, elusive spirit of pure fun.

CHAPTER II

WHEN they were quiet again it was a pleasantly dreamy mood they fell into. The fudge at their elbows, though no longer the fine rapture of its first appearance, was a good friend and a sufficient store—even though steadily dwindling—to be trusted to last out the evening. The fire, past its leaping, roaring youth, was presenting a heart of mystery.

“It’s a shame not to use those coals for a marshmallow toast,” said Philippa.

“How on earth can you think of anything more to eat *now?*” demanded Virginia, a little fretfully.

“You needn’t think you’re being more spiritual-minded and poetic because you think that,” was Philippa’s most unexpected retort. “It’s just because you’re not so healthy as I am. Bet you I can beat you talking ’bout ‘what-we’re-going-to-do-when-we-grow-up’ all the same.”

Virginia opened her lips, but closed them again. She was deterred from starting an

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argument by two considerations: They were all too comfortable and Friday-nightish really to relish a quarrel. And then, however eloquent she could be in reverie, she never could produce disconcertingly spicy remarks on such short notice as Philippa could. That was a special gift which all Philippa's friends held in wholesome regard. It was as if her stock of available wits was always conveniently packed in a little Gladstone bag ready for traveling.

So Virginia said, meekly, "Yes, let's."

Anne, too, was willing. She never soared much in her imaginings, but she had a fine, practical efficiency in details latent in her which, under the jurisdiction of a distinctly managing mother, never found much outlet. So she always came out strong in planning the house she was going to live in when she was married, her own clothes, and the clothes of her children through all stages from babyhood to the bridal costume, with a slight diversion in favor of the bridesmaids' dresses, which could not, of course, *all* be in the family.

Anne, therefore, had the start. Not usually very full of conversation, it was difficult to stop her now. After the other girls had been

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conducted through an excessively prosperous and up-to-date cement house with a red-tiled roof, and had mentally witnessed the installation of every piece of furniture from kitchen cabinet to piano, they turned restive. Philippa took unfair advantage of a moment of painful uncertainty over the drawing-room rug to interrupt with:

“Listening to Anne’s ‘what-we’re-going-to-do-when-we-grow-up’ is about as exciting as reading storekeepers’ circulars. Now, Virginia?”

Anne stiffened with indignation and, had it not been for the genial atmosphere, would have made a fitting rejoinder. As it was, she settled back with that expression of dignified disapproval that gives so much satisfaction to oneself.

“Have you decided yet whether to marry a fair-haired musician who will let you give concerts all the time in your own music room, or whether you will live alone, bob your hair, and produce an opera?” Philippa’s eyes were snapping with interest. She always enjoyed Virginia’s “what-I’ll-do-when-I-grow-up,” and often helped her with it.

But Virginia had a new plan—to study music in Italy and marry an Italian count

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who had been one of the Alpine engineers in the war and who lived in a villa in the midst of olive groves, with terraced formal gardens sloping down to a *terazzino*. Philippa luxuriated in this while Anne returned vigorously to her knitting, inclined to be critical of the villa and to suggest that her mother had said one just froze in those foreign places, and that they never had bathrooms, and that Virginia needn't think she was going to enjoy hearing the nightingales in her terraced gardens, because the malaria made it dangerous to remain out of doors after sunset.

Virginia at last subsided and looked into the red heart of the fire with dreamy eyes. But Philippa did not immediately take up the strain.

"Well, Philippa?" Anne demanded at last. She was never quite sure that people could have a good time and still not talk. Moreover, she was willing to have Philippa put forward some ideas which she could criticize.

Philippa leaned forward and turned the log. Immediately flames shot up.

"Somehow it seems to me that every time we start to talk about what we're going to *do*, we just reel off things we're going to *have*," she said, hesitatingly. "And after a while

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your mind gets all gummed up with sweet things, just the way you feel inside when you've had nothing much but candy at Christmas time. And it seems to me that *things* never seem to make as much real difference as the people you're with. Oh, I suppose I don't quite know what I mean, myself. Only, we don't seem to be able to imagine things that keep you interested. And yet—we're always trying to."

"I can tell fortunes with cards," Anne said, most unexpectedly.

Both Philippa and Virginia turned and stared blankly at her. If the kitten, now curled up in an easy chair, sound asleep, had suddenly spoken to the effect that he could do mental arithmetic, they couldn't have been more surprised.

"Yes I can, too. A friend of mother's taught me yesterday. And you don't have to imagine anything. It's all in the way the cards fall. She told me—" But Philippa was already rummaging in the drawer of the big library table.

"Here they are." She spread them excitedly before Anne. "Do go ahead. It's so much more fun to have something outside yourself tell you. I can't wait."

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The cards were shuffled, cut, and dealt, again and again. The children watched with a nice creepy thrill running down their backbones.

"You have had an illness."

"I've never been ill in my life," Philippa protested. She was much disappointed. It was so much fun to have that nice creepy feeling and believe.

"Think," said Anne, firmly. "It must be true. It's in the cards. Haven't you had the measles or something?"

Philippa knitted her still childishly downy brows. It was so much more fun to believe than not to. "I think mother told me I had the mumps when I was a baby," she said, finally. "But I don't believe I was very sick."

"That's it," said Anne. "And you don't know how ill you might have been if your mother hadn't taken good care of you. Awful things can come from mumps."

"Still it doesn't seem like an important enough illness to have the cards tell it," Philippa protested. But Anne went on. A gift was shown by the cards—and Philippa had just had a wrist watch for her thirteenth birthday. After that any skeptic would have

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been convinced. "A journey over water and land—"

"Oh, I *hope* that means we are going to the Cove next summer!"

"I don't quite understand about this dark man," Anne said. "Here he is again. He is in every hand."

"I hope I'm not going to have to marry him." Philippa looked at the offensive card forbiddingly. "I don't want to marry a dark man. I like blue eyes ever so much better. And then, everyone with brown eyes ought to marry some one with blue eyes."

"No. You are not going to marry him. The cards don't say that." Anne spoke with the mystic authority of a sibyl. "Maybe he's an enemy lurking around—"

"Gosh! I didn't know I had an enemy," Philippa said, impressed in spite of herself. "Perhaps it's—"

"No. I don't believe he's an enemy exactly. He always comes in connection with money."

"Perhaps he's a burglar!" Virginia's usually pale face was flushed with excitement. "And maybe Philippa will discover him and point her finger at him and make him think it's a pistol so he'll back out of the door."

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"There's nothing to show that he's a burglar." Anne's tone was cold. It was not often that she had the two girls hanging on her words in this rapt manner, and she didn't relish having this intrusion into her prophetic preserves. "It looks to me as if he were going to bring Philippa money."

She shuffled the cards and handed the pack to Philippa to cut. Then she dealt again, always in solemn silence. Philippa's eyes were wide and bright.

"There he is again," Anne announced in triumph. "And—yes—with the money. Don't bat your eyes, Philippa. Let's try it again."

In awestruck silence the process was repeated— There again was the dark man.

"And there's the money, too." Anne now was excited. "Philippa, that dark man is certainly going to bring you a fortune in some way. You're going to hear very soon about a fortune."

"'Fortune'—of course I'm going to have a fortune. There's nothing new about that." Whether Philippa was impatient with Anne's appreciation of herself in the role of an oracle or not, the child had managed to blot from her face any evidence of excitement. She spoke with casual indifference.

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"What do you mean? Has anybody died and left you something?" Anne blinked with the suddenness of Philippa's about-face.

"No. Nobody's died. But I've known for a long time that I was going to have one."

"But why didn't you tell us?" The assurance in the girl's face and voice nonplussed the others. If she was joking, she was going dangerously near to telling a real lie. And Philippa had always been rather a fanatic about that, contending that it wasn't right to assert what was true even on the 1st of April.

"Tell us who is the dark man, then," Anne demanded, a little suspiciously.

"I—don't—know. That's what I can't understand. But it's true about the fortune."

"Oh, tell us about it!" Anne and Virginia spoke together, their voices shrill with excitement.

"No. I'm sorry, but I don't believe I can tell you that yet," Philippa said, seriously. "I don't know all about it myself. And I can't quite understand about the 'dark man.' I should think it would be more apt to be a fair one."

CHAPTER III

“WHAT makes you so late? Have you seen Philippa?” Anne’s voice was more than a little sharp as she greeted Virginia with these questions. “I’ve been waiting out here at least a quarter of an hour. And it’s cold.”

“I haven’t seen Philippa. And it wasn’t my fault. Miss Graham asked me to clean off the blackboards.” Virginia’s voice was anxiously apologetic. She always tried to excuse herself when anyone was out of patience for any reason.

The girls stood still at the point in the playground where they always met after school. It was a jolly playground with swings and parallel bars and all sorts of athletic appliances. The Summit School was the pride of Clifton Park, a suburb of Washington, D. C. Most of the Parkites proved their belief in democratic education by sending their children to the public schools, loyally standing by the teachers who, as one child after another of the various households in the

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Park passed through their care, became valued and trusted family friends. Occasionally, it is true, it happened that some family deserted the belief of their ancestors and sent a child to a private school. But when that did occur it was apt to be not long before the absentee from the fold would reappear, a little shamefaced, but very glad to be back with the boys and girls she had grown up with. What was very unusual in so large a city, most of the householders in the Park were American-born and of American ancestry. Therefore among the professional men, scientists, specialists of various kinds, who made up the bulk of these, something of the fine old tradition of the New England or Western towns they had come from lingered, and the schoolhouse assumed the position that it had had everywhere in an earlier, simpler day. There were very few extremely wealthy Parkites and still fewer who could count themselves definitely poor. But there were no social distinctions drawn on that account; and there was surprisingly little snobbishness to harden the heart of the little rich girl or bring the tears of mortification to the eyes of her classmate from the smaller, less prosperous house.

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But to-day it was so cold in the playground that nobody lingered there, and it was lonesome as well as uncomfortable to be waiting there. Virginia's blond face began to look blue and Anne's nose was as red as her cheeks.

"There she is!" Virginia called out at last, relief in her voice. Then her face fell. "Why! Who's that with her? It's a *boy*. What in the world is Philippa walking with a boy for?"

"If she's going to bring him along, I'm going on without her."

Both girls waited stiffly until Philippa had come up to them. When they saw that she apparently had no intention of separating herself from Jeff Randolph, they turned on their heels and marched on ahead, their heads very high, their backs very unbending.

Whether Philippa recognized their emphatic disapproval or not, she made no sign. Her cheeks scarlet, her eyes bright, the curled ends of her brown bobbed hair shaking with every decided motion of her independent head, she walked briskly beside a peculiarly awkward and ungainly boy, whose dark-gray knickerbockers, a size too large and not tightly enough buckled about his thin legs, hung forlornly at about the most unbeautiful

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angle at which a gaunt boy's knickerbockers can well hang.

Perhaps it was well that Philippa could not hear the conversation that went on ahead of her. Both the girls were very indignant. No crime in the calendar, apparently, could have been greater than this, no insult to them more barefaced.

There were, of course, a few of the boys in their room at school of whom they did not disapprove so much as of some of the others. James Morgan was so funny he made even Miss Graham laugh when she was trying her best to be serious with him, and you *couldn't* help laughing at him at times, he said such perfectly ridiculous things—and then it lightened an otherwise dull day. And Lawrence Tracy and Judson Welliver had put on long pants, so it made the girls feel a little—not unpleasantly—self-conscious when they occasionally said a few words to them. There were some of the girls, too, who were “mushy” and wrote notes to the boys in school. Anne and Virginia—yes, and Philippa, too—talked about it together, rather gravely and sorrowfully, when they saw otherwise nice girls, whom they had always liked before, doing things like that.

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But Jeff Randolph was not one of those exceptional boys. For one thing, he hadn't lived in Clifton Park very long. The girls had been polite to him and offered to show him the place in the book the first days he was in school, but he had been so sullen and unresponsive-looking that they had decided he was one of the worst cases of boy in the school. Somehow—nobody could tell why unless it was because Lawrence Tracy had said he didn't like him—Jeff became so generally unpopular that he was usually left severely alone. So now, although Anne and Virginia would have thought it was bad enough to have Philippa walking home with any boy after school, when it was Jeff Randolph—still in short pants—they felt she had disgraced them all. They were glad that most of the girls had already gone home, but now and then they passed some one who looked in surprise at Philippa and Jeff and giggled. And since they couldn't catch the eye of either of the absorbed pair, these girls said things to Anne and Virginia because the three were so inseparable that each of them was held more or less accountable for anything the others did—

“Well! Look at Philippa Gale. When

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did *that* begin? And Jeff Randolph! I should think if she was going to have a case on anyone she could find some one better than that. She must be hard up!" Anne and Virginia pretended not to hear these remarks, but their faces were scarlet. It was like a family disgrace.

When they reached Philippa's house, which was the first on their way home, they halted irresolutely. They had meant to go in, of course. But now things were different. They didn't know how they ought to act until Jeff left. They had the constitution of their new club to talk about. Anne was the president, but Philippa was secretary, and she had said she would find out how you wrote constitutions and what they had in them. They stood stock-still at the place where the Gales's walk turned off, feeling awkward and out of temper.

Jeff did not go on! He turned into the walk with Philippa. Anne was too indignant to keep still or to be polite.

"Why, really, Philippa, I thought you were going to talk over the— You know what we were going to talk about."

Philippa faced her. Philippa's cheeks were very red and her eyes were snapping with

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anger. But her tone was surprisingly gentle and she chose her words with great circumspection:

"Yes, that is true, Anne. But Jeff is going to tell us about the way constitutions are written. He was secretary of a club out in Indiana. He has promised to write out a form for us to follow."

"This is the first time that ever I knew it was right for anyone who wasn't in a club to tell those who were in what to do! You're not the president of this club, anyway; you're only the secretary. I'm surprised at you, Philippa!"

"But won't you—?" Philippa looked uneasily aside at Jeff and her tone was still carefully conciliating.

"No, I won't. It's *my* club."

"I didn't know being president of a club made you *own* it and all the members." The battle spirit was stirring in Philippa.

"Well, I'm not going to come in. And Virginia isn't, either. *We* don't like to play with boys."

"I'd like to know why not?" Philippa abandoned conciliation for direct attack. "When did boys get to be anything especially queer? We've known boys and gone to

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school with boys and played with boys all our lives. It strikes me you've got a brother, Anne, only he isn't like Bayard—he's too mean to pay any attention to you, and we used to play dolls with Virginia's cousin. You act as if boys were strange wild animals!"

She whisked her skirt decidedly and turned her back on them.

With her hand on the arm of the pale and wistful Virginia, Anne started down the street at a brisk pace.

Philippa stood looking after them. If Anne had been there still she would have been sure to charge her with "batting her eyes." But the truth was Philippa was winking them hard to keep the tears back. It would have been hard to say whether she was more angry or more hurt.

"I don't think I'd better come in." Jeff was uneasily scuffling holes in the neat gravel walk. He might have been sulky or merely embarrassed. Nobody could have told anything from his dark face. "I got some things I want to do."

With a quick motion of her straight body and a flirt of the short skirts that was characteristic of Philippa, she turned and led the way into the house.

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"Oh, no! You promised to come in, you know. I've got to know how to write those constitution things now more than ever."

Jeff seemed to find as many difficulties of locomotion in getting into the reception room as if he were negotiating one of the most difficult passes of the snow-capped Sierras. His feet became entangled with door mats one and two, with the hall rugs, with the legs of two chairs and a table, before Philippa finally landed him on a seat by the desk. And all the time his dull, downcast face made him the last boy in the world you would have thought a girl of thirteen would have cared to bother with.

That, at least, was what Mrs. Gale thought when, happening to come downstairs, she found the two children with their heads close together over the desk. Jeff started guiltily to his feet, his face crimson with embarrassment, his cap trodden underfoot. But Mrs. Gale greeted the boy with her usual pleasant hospitality. It was only when she said casually, on leaving the room, "Where are the girls?"—for any after-school that didn't see the three together demanded explanation—and Philippa answered, with elaborate

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lightness, "They just didn't want to come in," that the mother wondered.

So when Doreen stopped at her door to find out, as always, whether "mother was in," the first instant on re-entering the house, Mrs. Gale, changing into the comfortable not-new-but-pretty dress that she kept for the usual family dinner, asked her elder daughter whether the boy was still downstairs with Philippa.

"No. Not now," Doreen said, her blue eyes laughing. "When he saw me he jumped up and bolted out. Who is he, anyway?"

"Just somebody. They seem to have something they are working out together."

"They were knee deep in rejected papers. I can't say I admire Pip's choice of a collaborator."

That evening, when Philippa was dutifully studying her lessons in her room, Mr. Gale, after he had finished reading the paper and had filled his pipe, turned to his wife.

"Well, what's Pip's latest?" he asked, with an expectant smile. His dynamic younger daughter was a constant joy to him.

"An adorer, apparently," Doreen answered laughing. "And, oh, dad, *such* an adorer!"

"I'd hate to have any of that nonsense,"

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Mrs. Dale said, with a quick frown. "I've always been so glad you and Bayard escaped any of the premature sweethearting. You were always so unconscious of it, Doreen, even in high school."

"That's just because I never talk about things very much," Doreen laughed. "I had a devastating romance when I was in Miss Graham's room."

Father and mother turned on her in surprise and some consternation.

"I never knew anything about that," Mr. Gale said, evidently none too well pleased.

"The adored one didn't, either. It was a purely mental romance. I spent my time constructing dramas in which, under strangely dramatic circumstances, he discovered my true worth. I saw him at a dance last week and spent the evening trying to evade him. He has grown to be quite the fattest youth I ever saw."

"You don't suppose this is one of Philippa's lame ducks?" Mr. Gale's voice softened tenderly. He was recalling a long series of rescued animals. And he was picturing Philippa's passionate despair when the kitten she had rescued at the cost of an ugly bite on her hand from a neighbor's dog had,

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in turn, when grown to the hunter stage, killed the cardinal that had just built his nest in the child's bird house.

“But those have always been something small and weak and suffering,” Mrs. Gale said, slowly. “There's nothing of the lame duck about that boy.”

CHAPTER IV

“MOTHER, may I have the first meeting of the club at our house?” Philippa, eager and confident, stood at the door of her mother’s room.

In spite of preoccupation with a persistent pucker in the hem of a dress she was making for the child, Mrs. Gale smiled at the flushed and eager face. At the same time she sighed, a queer little sigh of complex origin. For the girl’s enormous zest in things, her joyous sparkle of anticipation, made one wonder about the disappointments that might be in store for her. And Philippa was far from saintly in bearing disappointments. In fact, the whole family braced itself when they had foreknowledge that one was due.

If this request couldn’t be granted, for example, Mrs. Gale knew that that eager, rosy face would be instantly swallowed up in despair. Not one ray of light would penetrate the gloom and, alas! the rage at cruel fate. For at least five minutes tragedy would reign.

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As she thought this the mother sighed with relief because this time she wouldn't have to portion out gloom. There was no earthly reason why the club shouldn't meet there.

"Yes, indeed, dear. When do you meet?"

"Friday night. And may we have the living room?"

"Of course, dear. What kind of a club is it?"

"We don't know yet. We'll decide that to-night. Anne wants it to be a 'do good' club, and Virginia wants it to be a dramatic club that will study music and give operas, and one of the girls wants a debating society, and I think I want a stamp club because I like to think about going to different countries and—"

"But I thought you were already at work on the constitution?" Mother was fighting to hide the smile that was hard to repress. "How could you make a constitution when you don't know what your club is going to be?"

"Oh! gosh, that's easy."

"Philippa, please don't say 'Gosh.'"

"No'm, I won't. Jeff showed me how to leave a blank for the kind of club. He says most of the constitutions are alike, anyway.

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He brought me some books of things his father belongs to, and they are pretty much all alike, about officers and dues and things. And that's what we want mostly—to have officers and meetings so people will want to come in and we can decide whether to let them in or not. Jeff says it doesn't much matter, anyway, what kind of a club, I mean, because most of the time is taken up having fights about officers and the order of business. They never get around to do much beside that."

Mrs. Gale couldn't hide the smile this time. Only, it was not the children that amused her, but the grown-ups. She wasn't a very patient clubwoman herself.

"But how do you know that you are secretary and Anne president if you haven't had your first meeting yet?"

"Oh—that's all right. We just decided that first. There's a way to do it. You decide on your officers and then you call them—what's that word?—'*pro tem.*' And then usually the *pro tem.* people get made regular officers. That's how this is going to be. Of course, I could have been president, but it seemed to me the cleverest person had to be secretary. Anne couldn't possibly be

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secretary, but she can keep her face straighter than I can. And she likes to make people mind. I don't. I'd rather have the fun of persuading them to do my way. The only trouble is, Virginia will have to be treasurer because that's the only big office left, and she's very poor at arithmetic. Never mind. I can keep the accounts for her, and she can copy them. She writes a good hand and makes nice curly figures."

"Anne and Virginia haven't been here much lately, have they?" Mrs. Gale ventured, cautiously.

"No. They've been angry with me. Being angry's a regular occupation with Anne; she spends lots of thought on it. But they made up in time for the club. They had to, of course, because some other girls are coming in and we couldn't have things the way we want unless we three hang together."

"All right, Pip. You can have the room."

"Mother, could we have some refreshments?"

"If something simple will do. What do you want?"

"Just cocoa and cookies or doughnuts. Just to have *something*."

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"I'm willing, dear. If Doreen isn't going out she'll make the cocoa for you, I'm sure. And ask Mollie to see that there's a little heavy cream that you can whip."

"Thanks, muzz! Thanks *ever* so much! I'll go ask Doreen. I'm specially anxious to have refreshments because I'm afraid Anne and Virginia are going to get angry at me again."

"*Why, Philippa?*"

But the child was out of hearing.

CHAPTER V

FRIDAY evening Mr. and Mrs. Gale, banished to Mr. Gale's little den upstairs, heard the girls tramping through the hall and into the living room. Good mother as Mrs. Gale was, she remembered ruefully that the floors had just been done over, and had a mental vision of the sadly marred and scratched spots, particularly where four girls would sit in a row on the long davenport. At the age at which they were, dainty feminine footwear would not be much in evidence.

"Isn't that a boy's voice?" Mr. Gale took the pipe out of his mouth to say.

"It can't be. This is just a girl's club."

Involuntarily they listened. It was unmistakably a boy's voice.

"It's some mistake."

There was a momentary hubbub downstairs, then a closed door and quiet.

"I can't understand what Philippa can be about. I don't half—"

"Oh, the child's all right. She just has

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some scheme in her head—mighty well worth knowing about if we are ever permitted. Listen!”

A door downstairs was opened and a tumult of high girlish voices reached them. They could hear Anne's loud and dominant, Virginia's excited treble, Philippa's asserting itself with an affect of great impatience and self-restraint. These three voices made their way against a background of indeterminate ones.

Then the door shut again and there was silence. They heard Philippa come out into the hall below, speak a few words evidently to the boy waiting there. The front door opened and closed again. Philippa's raised voice came to them again, distinct, scornful:

“Now, I suppose you are all perfectly happy.”

If they were happy, it was evidently felicity of a subdued type, for the babel of sound that usually marked the gatherings of Philippa's clan was absent. Soon there was the clatter of dishes which told the elders that refreshments were in progress. The father and mother began to talk of other things. They had almost forgotten that there had been any special crisis in the career of their youngest until Philippa stood before them in person.

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There were no marks of conflict visible upon her. In fact, she looked distinctly exhilarated. Her mouth, perhaps, was a trifle compressed. To offset that, her eyes were joyously bright and her cheeks beautifully pink.

"Well, Pippa, what sort of an evening?" Father pulled her down on his lap and into his arms.

"Mixed," she replied, giving him rather an abstract hug.

"What were you trying to do, anyway—get that boy into your club? I judge there was some opposition."

"There was." Philippa was smiling with reminiscent satisfaction.

"Did you carry your point?"

"I did not." Her tone was singularly unchastened. "Nobody but myself was for him."

"Did he want to come in?"

"No, he just came because I told him to."

Mr. and Mrs. Gale exchanged puzzled glances.

"Why did you want him in, dear?" Mrs. Gale couldn't refrain from asking.

"I just thought it would be a good thing," replied the child with an inscrutable countenance.

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"Oh, well, we all have to give in to the will of the majority sometimes."

"Oh yes, I gave in for the present. But I haven't given up for good. Of course I'll get him in after a while."

"But, *dear*, why keep this up? Why should you be more apt to be successful later on than now?"

"They'll just get tired of opposing, because they haven't any real reason. And my reason will be just as good later on as it is now."

The next instant Philippa had gone off into one of her ecstasies of laughter.

"Oh, it *was* so funny! There was Anne, being so dignified and respectable about having her own way"—followed an inimitable mimicry of Anne—"and Virginia, looking at Anne and looking at me and twittering like an anxious little canary and crying every little while"—Virginia was done to the life. "And all of them thinking they were giving arguments when they were just getting crosser and crosser. Every girl there got up and said just the same thing in different words, that she didn't *want* Jeff in the club. There wasn't a single real argument."

"Are you sure you had any real arguments?" Mr. Gale interposed, curiously.

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"I think they were arguments."

"Weren't they just different ways of saying you thought it would be pleasant to have Jeff in the club?" Mr. Gale was smiling.

"Good gracious, no! I think we'd have a whole lot better time if we didn't have him. But I could see three good reasons for having him all the same. Here are the ones I wrote down: (1) Boys look at things in a different way from girls, so we'll learn more if we have both sides. (2) Boys know more about arguing than girls, and we ought to know how to advance real arguments instead of just gabbling. (3) Jeff knows a lot about what they call 'parliamentary law'—how to run clubs, you know." Philippa folded up her piece of paper and put it carefully away in her pocket. "Then I did have another reason, but I didn't give it."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I just thought that it wouldn't be—that I'd better say it."

"Well, run away to bed; you've lost lots of sleep as it is."

Philippa went rather reluctantly to the door.

"I always do have to go to bed just when things get interesting," she said, a little rebel-

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liously. Then she turned to them again. "Oh, it *was* fun to see them all say and do just what you knew they would do—as if it were a play you knew and they had learned the lines perfectly. It was a *splendid* fight!"—with an ecstatic giggle. "You'll come and tuck me in bed, muzz?"

When her sparkling face was gone the father and mother turned to each other. Then a shade of anxiety crossed Mrs. Gale's face.

"Sometimes I'm almost frightened at the child's intensity of feeling," she said. "She's always tremendously up or frightfully down."

"I'd be bothered if she didn't have that clear, impersonal view of things," Mr. Gale said, "and her delicious sense of fun—she can laugh at herself, too, occasionally. I tell you she's not going to be any ordinary personality, that child."

"We've said that about each of the children in turn, you know."

"Yes, with reason," he persisted, although they both had to laugh at their own fond folly.

"But I tell you, when you get a woman that can feel like a woman and think like a man, you've a combination that is well worth watching. It's because there are some like

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that that some 'interests' we know of are afraid of the woman vote. The other kind they could manage well enough. It's going to be great fun watching Philippa every step of the way."

"I wonder *why* she wants that boy in the club," said Mrs. Gale, musingly. "What I'd like to know is the reason she didn't give."

CHAPTER VI

LOOKING back, that club night seemed the last time she saw the joyous brightness on Philippa's face for many days. She came home from school the next day in one of the darkest of her dark moods. Philippa's dark moods meant a sad, sad face, dramatic sighs on all occasions calling for emotion of any kind, words of self-denying courtesy greeting any request, and a general display of world-weary patience which reduced everyone in her vicinity to impotent despair. A royal rage on Philippa's part was to the irresponsible onlooker something of a treat because of the pictorial quality of brilliant eyes, stormily knitted brows, and splendidly flushed cheeks—all, happily, speedily, over. But her moods of depression were regarded as an unmitigated trial by every one in the family. Sympathy was worse than useless, expostulation, reasoning, merely made her worse. The only thing apparent that could dis-

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lodge the child from her mood was the independent resolution of Philippa herself.

And this time it seemed that that would never come.

She led the life of a recluse, coming, unaccompanied, straight home after school or going off by herself on solitary walks. Neither Anne nor Virginia ever came home from school with her, nor did she go to their houses. When the first Friday afternoon after the stormy club meeting came Mrs. Gale, really distressed, tried to find out what was the matter.

"Wouldn't you like to try some other candy than fudge this evening?" she asked. "If you do, just—"

"I'll make fudge for you and Doreen if you like," Philippa said, with a martyred sigh. "But there won't be anyone else here."

"Not Anne and Virginia?"

"No." That word was all for some time. Then she blurted out, "They're angry with me again."

"What's the matter?"

"The club. Anne doesn't like some of the things I said. She wants to run things, and it makes her mad if I do, too."

"And Virginia?"

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"Anne's got hold of her and won't let her come."

"I think that is too bad of Anne." The distress of her youngest was too much for Mrs. Gale's common sense. "Let me have a talk with Anne. She has no right to ride roughshod over you in this way."

"No, mother. Please don't. I think I'd better fight my battles myself."

Back of Philippa's effort at self-control was a sore heart. The self-respect she had shown brought forth involuntary respect from the mother, also sympathy.

"Now, Philippa," she said, "you know that Anne can't help wanting to boss things. And you know that every little while something will come along that you will want to have your own way about. So collisions are inevitable if you are both in any organization that you both have decided ideas about. You are destined to be in hot water all the time. So why don't you just be sensible and resign from the club? Then you can enjoy your real friendship with Anne without the danger of these quarrels."

But Philippa, sitting up very straight, was regarding her mother with a face of astonished disapproval.

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"Mother!" she said, accusingly, "*did you want to resign from the Board that time it was under fire?*"

Mrs. Gale couldn't help wincing at this direct attack. She had to admit that the child's retort was entirely justifiable. She had used the very words that Philippa had just discharged at her in discussing something that had happened to one of their friends. She said:

"Yes, dear. Now that you put it that way I can see you are quite right. I am afraid I didn't realize how seriously you felt about it. Of course, one can never desert a cause one believes in."

When Saturday came without any of the eagerly planned games or hikes that the three girls so loved, no chestnuting when the burrs opened, no jolly talks by the wood fire, Philippa could no longer hide from her mother the fact that she was really unhappy.

"I'd like to shake those girls," Mrs. Gale said, viciously, to her husband when the long day was over and her child safely asleep in a moonlit room.

"Steady, girl," her husband said, reaching out and patting her hand soothingly. "This is one of the times when we just have to sit

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back on the side lines and watch. We can root hard for our side, though," he qualified his statement, laughing. "And now I want to tell you what Dubois of Minnesota said to me to-day. It really looks pretty favorable to me. As far as I can see, this is the way the committee is divided."

CHAPTER VII

PHILIPPA, contentedly munching a large wedge of cake in the kitchen, was engaging Mollie in conversation relative to Thanksgiving preparations. It was inevitable always that some special season or occasion should be the center of Philippa's imaginative revels. Since this was the second week in November and there was a fine wintry tang in the air, it was only natural that Philippa's mind should turn to Thanksgiving.

"I smell something spicy," she said, sniffing the air. "Like fruit cake or mincemeat."

"Shure it's mincemate it is." Mollie smiled broadly. "It's the cake I'll make to-morry."

"Let me see the mincemeat, Mollie, won't you?"

Mollie jerked her head toward the jar that was standing on a table by the window.

"Let me taste it, won't you?"

"Yez 'll not foind it the way it used to taste. Shure it's big business kapin' a bit av th'

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crayther from the mince poi and the loikes av thot!" Mollie sniffed rebelliously.

Philippa tasted the mincemeat.

"I think it's as good as it ever was, Mollie," she said, loyally. "And it hasn't any of that burny feeling in your throat it used to have. And, anyway, Mollie, *you* could make things good if you had hardly anything to make them good with."

"Yez do have th' gift of smoothin' a body down, Miss Philippy, I'll say thot for yez. Ye hand it out loike as if yez came from th' ould counthry and had kissed th' Blarney stone. And oi'll say oi did put double of raisins and currants in it. An' oi'm trustin' to thot an' th' apples settin' up a little Shinn Fein av its own. Oi've heard av th' loikes av thot." Mollie's rougish twinkle was good fun to see.

"Oh, Mollie, isn't it going to be fun?" Philippa's eyes began to sparkle and her cheeks to glow with the excitement of the picture she was conjuring up. "Little Brother will be home"—"Little Brother" was her name for Bayard, just precisely because he was six feet one and the biggest and oldest and strongest of the three. "And maybe mother 'll let Doreen and me go down to the

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station to meet him if it isn't too late. And we'll stand at the gate and watch the people getting off the train, 'n' everybody 'll be jolly and smiling and carrying suitcases 'cause they're going home to spend Thanksgiving. And they'll be selling bunches of red berry sprays on the street—not holly and mistletoe yet, of course, but just beginning to make you think of Christmas. That's why Thanksgiving is so 'specially jolly—because Christmas is still ahead. And then when we get Bayard home, mother 'n' father 'n' everybody 'll sit all together and talk and laugh. Oh, we do have such good times just talking and laughing! And Bayard will tell us all about football and the fellows. I like Lawrence Gardner best of the fellows, and I think Doreen does, too. And there'll be the next day ahead with the cranberry jelly and crisp celery and everything good. And great big brown Mr. Turkey and the luscious dressing you make. I can hardly wait! And then there'll be mince pies and ice cream and nuts and raisins and jokes and everybody feeling so happy. And telling stories around the fire afterward. Oh, Mollie, I just can't wait! I just can't wait!"

Mollie looked at her with some envy and a

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little shadow in her blue Irish eyes, but with entire comprehension.

“Shure, child, it's grand to feel that way, and oi pray the saints that there'll nothing happen to spoil th' day—or anny other day that makes y'r eyes shine loike thot. And now, Miss Philippy, *av* yez plase, oi'd thank yez to give me th' loan av my own kitchen. For it's behind toime I am with dinner an' it's y'rsilf that's hinderin' me.”

“All right, I will. But who is shaking feather dusters out of the window? It can't be—oh, Mollie, it can't be *snow!*” The ecstasy in Philippa's voice was indescribable. Mollie gave an alarmed glance out of the window.

“Shure oi'm afraid yez will be tellin' the truth,” she said, glumly. “And a foine time oi'll have gettin' to mass th' mornin'.”

Philippa was too happy to notice Mollie's ingratitude. The curious attitude of grown-ups toward snow was always a puzzle for her. Even mother wasn't properly grateful sometimes. She seemed to think that wet shoes and stockings and little puddles of water on the floor where you left your rubbers really mattered. And Philippa, who could never be completely happy if she didn't think the

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people about her felt the same way, was always trying to find out if their opinion of snow hadn't changed since the last time they talked about it.

The child glued her face to the window pane.

"Oh, it's lying on the ground; it's a real snow! We'll have coasting and snowballing. And we don't usually have them for a month—and sometimes not at all. There wasn't the least bit of coasting last winter. Oh, I'm sure it's going to be an old-fashioned kind of winter, like the ones mother and father had when they were children up in New England. And it makes it seem as if Thanksgiving would come right away, and Christmas, too. Don't you think we are going to have coasting, Mollie. Look! The ground is getting white already."

But Mollie refused to be of her way of thinking.

"It 'll stay just long enough to be slush and then mud. And then yez 'll catch a foine cold."

But Philippa was out of the room. She could not stay in such an uncongenial atmosphere. But she found an utterly empty house. Mother was out doing the Saturday marketing and Doreen hadn't come home

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yet. Ordinarily she would have called up Anne and Virginia. If it had been she that were angry with them she would do it now; but they were angry with her, so she couldn't. Maybe one of them would call. She hung around a long time near the phone where she could hear the first vibration.

None came. The air was thicker and thicker with the white, twisting, feathery flakes. There was a steady purposefulness in the way they came. The ground was already covered. The telephone didn't ring. There never had been, so far as she could remember, a Saturday or Sunday snow before, when she and Anne and Virginia had not been getting ready to go out in it by this time. Her throat felt choked up. Her hand went out toward the telephone, but she took it back resolutely. The house was very silent. Even the living room seemed lonesome. She watched until there was a thick carpet over everything; the boughs of the trees, twigs even, were being outlined in white. She tried to forget her loneliness in a book. She didn't look at the snow for an hour.

Voices began to ring out from the street. The living room windows overhung a tiny valley with Kingle brook at the bottom of

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it; she couldn't see the street from there. She flew to the front of the house. There they were with their sleds, several of the girls she knew, and the boys. There—yes, that was Anne! And Virginia with her. They had Anne's brother's bobsled. Perhaps they were going to stop for her. Philippa darted out into the hall to get ready. She found her rubbers and got them on. Then she waited. They didn't stop. She heard their voices as they went on.

The tears began to come into Philippa's eyes. Then she straightened herself and switched her skirts with decision. Anyone who saw her at that moment would have been delighted with the fine, healthy color in her cheeks.

"They needn't think they are going to keep *me* in," she said to herself, with a toss of her head.

Up into the attic she went. It was a cozy, comfortable attic that extended over most of the house. The baby-soft fingers of the snow were tapping daintily against the two little windows tucked under the sloping eaves.

"I don't think Bayard took his bob away to college with him," she was thinking. "Oh, I hope it is here!"

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It was there, in a corner with a pile of old school books on top of it. It took only a moment to get it out and dust it with an old dress that hung on the wall (let's hope it wasn't something that Mrs. Gale wanted to use). She got the big thing downstairs herself until Mollie, hearing something bumping down the second flight, came out and helped her with it. Then, after a pause to get on leggings and woolen bloomers and heavy cap and sweater, Philippa was out on the snowy street.

It seemed so strange to be out alone, so lonely with the fast-falling snow making a veil that divided her from groups of other children, that, for a moment, she wished she hadn't come. But it never occurred to her to turn back. Now and then one of the children recognized her and called to her through the snow-laden air.

"Anne and Virginia are on ahead," Gertrude Tracy shouted.

"All right. I know," Philippa answered. She was not going to let anyone know that Anne and Virginia were angry with her. She felt a twinge of pain, all the same. This wonderful Saturday snow would have been so different if they had all been together.

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She trudged on. The hill began to be steep. It was a steady climb for almost half a mile. Philippa remembered from two years before that there was one place, about half-way up, where you always told yourself that, once you were down, nothing would persuade you to climb up again. But the wild swoop down which made you feel as if your heart had dropped clean out of your body was so wonderful that your one idea was to get to the top again.

"But I wonder if there is any coasting. Isn't the snow too light to pack?" she wondered. As if in answer a sled whizzed past her. She had to jump out of the way. It was Anne's brother's sled, not nearly so good as the one Bayard had made from two small coasters connected by a stout oak plank. The Gale bobsled was noted. Resolutely Philippa climbed on up the hill.

Five or six sleds passed her. She recognized Lawrence Tracy's big bob with James Morgan and Alice Morgan and the two Henderson girls, and a big boy who didn't live in the Park, Philippa was sure. They were all cheering as they passed. Then the Welliver bob and two or three small sleds, one of them with someone who looked like Jeff

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Randolph, stretched out flat upon it. Philippa almost disliked Jeff at that moment. She was sorry she had ever tried to get him into the club, since it had made all this trouble. But, having started the thing, she had to go on with it. She was as lonely, with the snow falling fast around her and the shouts of glad excitement coming from each coasting party that tore past her, as though she were really alone in the world.

By the time she reached the top of the hill her feet were beginning to be very cold. She looked back. The Clifton Park hill was, on the rare occasions when Washington had a real snow, a really wonderful coast. It was a straight fall, with no twists to make it dangerous, no car track, and a long level at the bottom, so it was easy to slow up before one reached the cartrack and thoroughfare for whizzing motors that crossed it at right angles. Apart from an occasional motor going their way—which often good-naturedly gave them a tow up the hill, or one coming up behind them—there was no danger except the slight one of running into one another. In short, it was an unusual combination for the city of an exciting coast with a fairly safe one. And everyone from far and near

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thronged there whenever word went forth that sport was to be had. One couldn't afford to wait until the snow stopped falling. For when that happened it was more than possible the Washington climate would see to it that you dragged your sled home over the bare ground.

The scene that filled Philippa's eyes was a beautiful one. For a long way there were no houses. On either side of the road stretched what seemed like the forest, but were really the parks of two big estates. The evergreen trees and the graceful tracery of bare tapering limbs were covered with the softest, whitest puffs of snow; whiteness broken by white-etched shrubs swept and billowed up to the top of the gentle slopes. Beyond, the hill descended, divided by the hardly perceptible depression of the road and with an occasional white-roofed house on either side; all along the road were the moving groups of the girls and boys she knew dragging their sleds up the long climb.

For a moment she was as alone as if there were no one within miles of her—more alone, since the faint noise of talk and laughter that floated up to her merely reminded her that she was companionless. So, when a voice

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spoke from behind, she jumped in nervousness that was almost fright.

“Of a truth,” the voice said, “it ees a curious *espèce* of—what ees *traineau* call eetself in these country?”

“Sled,” said another voice, a childish one with a distinctly patronizing intonation.

CHAPTER VIII

PHILIPPA turned. She recognized little French Jean who, to the great entertainment of the fourth grade, had entered the Clifton Park school at the beginning of the term. But the really gorgeous figure beside him she had never seen before.

He wore a wonderfully fitting uniform of the "horizon blue" which Philippa, in common with every other child in the capital of the United States, had grown to associate with the French army. But while it seemed natural to see any number of different kinds of uniform downtown, or where the legations dotted the fashionable part of the city, it was startling to see gorgeousness here, on a man whose Sam Brown belt accentuated slender waist and broad shoulders, whose high rank was revealed by the elaborate braiding on the red top of his cap and by the gilt insignia at collar and shoulders. And, rising from the snow, the brilliantly polished tan boots looked highly unnatural.

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The really extraordinary thing, however, was that all this glory was worn by a man whose bright brown eyes laughed merrily into hers, and whose white teeth gleamed in a smile of almost boyish friendliness. He went on with his query about the sled quite as though he had been in daily familiar conversation with Philippa all of his life.

"Perhaps thees leetle—but, no, I cannot call her 'mad'moiselle'"—

"Her name is Philippa Gale, and she is in the eight grade," put in the black-eyed Jean, a pleasing respect for the eighth grade in his voice.

"My son, he know so moche bettair these *tout-à-fait Américain*." Here the gentleman laughed merrily. "If I could only at-tend the four-r-rth grade of the pub-lic school of the Clifton Par-r-rk I should know almost as moche as *le petit Jean*. But perhaps Mees Phileepa will tell me of what *espèce* is these sled? And for why there are two and why joined togethair. But, yes, I begin to see. Eet is that more may ride, and the leetle sled of the front is not fastened but with these pivot so it may turn."

"I wish I had one," said little Jean, gloomily.

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"Where is it that one may be bought?" asked Monsieur d'Aillebout. Philippa was sure this must be the French officer who, with his wife and children, had leased the Cunningham place at her left soon after the signing of the armistice. The carpet of snow had made their approach noiseless.

"My brother Bayard made this," she explained. "I don't know whether you can buy them or not. The boys out here make theirs."

"There is some more American—what you call it?—'smartness' for you to learn, Jean," his father laughed.

"I wish I had one *now*," said little Jean, who, for all his progressive ways, was, after all, only nine years old. And his lips puckered as if he were going to try.

"I'll take him down," Philippa said, eagerly. "Only, I'm afraid it's too big for me to manage alone. I can guide it, but there ought to be a big boy at the back to use his foot for a brake. We'll have to wait."

"But for why cannot I not serve? I have steered many things—horses—men—automobiles—boats. I know to skate, to ski in Switzerland. Of a truth, I should guide these—what is his name?"

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"Bobsled."

"*Bon! Embarque!* Get on the bobsled, Jean. And let us thank Mees Phileeppa."

But Jean was so far Americanized that he forgot to thank Philippa. He scrambled on the sled back of her, in a solemn rapture, adjusted himself, and clung like a limpet to the sides. Monsieur le colonel d'Aillebout pulled his cap more firmly down on his head and half sat, half kneeled at the back, one beautifully polished boot out in the snow. By this time Anne and Virginia had reached the top of the hill with the two boys and one girl of their party. Quite a little crowd gazed at them in amazement.

"*Avancez!*" called out Monsieur d'Aillebout gayly and waved his hand to the on-lookers as he pushed off.

The snow had stopped and they could see clearly the white world that stretched out under them. The slope was moderate at first and they skimmed gently along. But in a minute they came to a steep decline; so, in spite of the fact that the snow was loose and light as yet, the pace became more and more fast. At last came that breathless drop, terrifying but exhilarating, which was worth all the rest of it put together. Phi-

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lippa was tense with exultation; little Jean squealed with delight; M. d'Aillebout burst into a ringing cheer. The next instant they were sliding sedately along the level.

As she turned to climb the hill again Philippa expected, of course, that the French officer and his son would go on toward the street cars and downtown. But, instead, M. d'Aillebout took the rope from her and started back with her. After the first surprise it seemed quite the natural thing that this should be so. He chatted with her in his only occasionally unintelligible English as companionably as one of her own age would have done. There was no doubt that he was thoroughly enjoying himself. His eyes sparkled gayly; his white teeth flashed in an almost continual smile beneath the jaunty little black mustache; the little Jean was quite venerable, apparently, beside his father. When they got to the top of the hill, other boys and girls had come; several sledless ones hung about, looking wishful.

"Don't you want to go down?" Philippa asked of a girl who was a stranger to her.

While the girl was taking her seat M. d'Aillebout said, low in Philippa's ear, "I am so glad that you saw that one. I do not think

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I could bear that a child should be disappointed." Philippa looked up at him. Something in his voice seemed strange to her. His face was quite sad. "In this war so many children have suffered." He was silent for a moment. Then: "And that leetle boy, *n'est ce pas?* He does not look to have a—what you call him?—a bobsled?"

After that, it seemed only natural that the five of them should coast together all the afternoon.

The two strange children whom they knew as Bettie and Tom were jolly. Theirs was the gayest party on the hill. The French officer kept them laughing all the time. His very mistakes in English were funny; he enjoyed them as much as they did. He was untiring; the joy of the descent was always new to him; the tedium of the climb they forgot because he told them funny stories all the way. Philippa would have been perfectly happy if it had not been for Anne and Virginia, whom they passed constantly. Anne acted as if Philippa were not there at all. Once or twice Philippa met Virginia's eyes and Virginia smiled at her timidly. She looked at M. d'Aillebout, too, as though she would like to meet him. But when Anne

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was looking, she was afraid to notice Philippa at all.

"It's so *silly!*" Philippa stormed to herself. "Anne seems to get as much enjoyment out of being angry as I do out of a good story." Jeff, too, held aloof. "That's just because he's bashful," Philippa thought. And that didn't hurt her at all. But every little while the thought of Anne and Virginia came to her with a little pang.

"Thees must be the last voyage," M. d'Aillebout said at last, after a hurried glance at his wristwatch. "We must make eet the best of them all."

"Oh no! Please don't go!" went up in a chorus from the children.

M. le colonel took off his hat and bowed low with a great flourish.

"My thanks to you for that you want me to r-r-remain," he said, smiling boyishly. "There is everywhere the friendship between my country and thees country. It is the one good gift of the war." His face clouded, though he made a visible effort to throw off sad thoughts. "But, *voyons*, this will nevair do. We must play. It ees good to play; it makes wounds to heal."

"But you don't really *have* to go, do you?"

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Philippa coaxed. The thought of his going made her feel lonesome again.

"It is to regret that I must. I have played. Now I must work. Two gentlemen await me at the Embassy who now are not of the good humor. And *le petit Jean* he will perish from the earth if I do not buy for heem a—what you call heem—?"

"Baseball bat," announced Jean, with prompt exactitude.

"Yes—that thing he have name he must have. He is so *Américain*, *le petit Jean*, that he is of the baseball horses—"

"Team," corrected Jean, with patient superiority.

"Team?" But I thought—oh, well, it is nothing. Now we will embark ourselves. It should be the best *chute* yet. The snow it ees hard packed. How Mees Phileeppa would like to ski in the Alps?"

"I'm going to sometime," Philippa said, with crisp finality.

"I do not myself doubt that you will do it. It is in the air of thees country to make accomplishment of what you desire. It make Jean to be of the baseball hor—team of which the *capitaine* is the son of a *boche*. Nevair have I think that my son shall be a

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friend of the son of a *boche*. But in thees country it happen because that son of a *boche* is an American. But now we go. Zut!"

They were off. Almost from the first the motion was rapid enough to take their breaths away; the track was now hard and firm. In a second, it seemed, they caught up with Anne's brother's bob; passed it. They cheered.

"I *knew* our bob was faster," gasped Philippa. "Perhaps Anne—"

She never finished her sentence. Something was happening. She felt it in the tense air. Just as they took the plunge down the steepest part of the slide they heard a motor horn shriek agonizingly. Something shot out from behind them and crashed against a tree on the other side of the road. M. d'Aillebout slowed them up and Philippa automatically steered for their side of the road out of the traffic. Before she had got to her feet, it seemed, the French officer was across the road where a bob—Anne's bob—had overturned and spilled its occupants. But as she looked they—all of them—were stirring.

"No wounded, I think," called out M. d'Aillebout.

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Philippa looked beyond the bob to the other side of the road. It was a small sled. There was one figure lying beside it. And that figure had not moved.

"Oh, somebody's hurt! somebody's hurt!" she called out and ran across. Almost as soon as she got there M. d'Aillebout was beside her.

"It's Jeff Randolph," she panted. "Oh, do you think he is badly hurt?"

"I think it may be only that he is stunned," the French officer said with a cheerful voice.

But his face was very serious. He caught up a little snow and pressed it on the boy's forehead. But there was no sign of life. A man from the automobile joined them, and one of the ladies. Anne was brushing the snow vigorously from her shoulders and skirts, and stamping. She pointedly did not look their way, although her companions were. She had the mad look in its most extreme form on her face.

"How can she?" Philippa thought.

"I hope the boy isn't injured seriously," said the gentleman from the automobile. "I'm afraid we put him in a tight place. We tried to slow up, but our brakes wouldn't work, so he had to get out of our way. He

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evidently tried to prevent a collision with you." The man was speaking to M. d'Aillebout. "Then he realized the danger of colliding with the other sled. He almost cleared it; just grazed them. But he'smashed up himself."

They watched anxiously while M. d'Aillebout dabbled some more snow in his face. After what seemed to Philippa an age his eyelids twitched. Suddenly he opened his eyes. They were uncomprehending, blank. He didn't seem even curious. He tried to turn himself; winced. Then he closed his eyes again.

"The sooner we get heem to his home and call a doctor the bettair it will be for heem," said the Frenchman. "Do you know where is his home?" he asked Philippa.

She gave the street and number.

"I know the Park. I'll take him home," said the man.

"And I will go with heem and do what may be done until the coming of the physician. I *naturellement* have of the experience. I will not hurt our wounded one. But some one should call the physician *tout de suite*—immediately."

"My house is nearest. I'll telephone them to call a doctor," Philippa said, quickly. "But

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do you think he is badly hurt?" She spoke in a responsible, elderly sort of way. But the French officer saw that her lips were quivering childishly. His tone took on the tenderness it always held for the troubles of children.

"He is dazed yet from the shock," he said. "I think that may be all, although it may be that there is some hurt. If you will let me know the telephone number of your house I will speak to you after the doctor has been with him."

Soberly Philippa turned to go. Anne's voice came to them:

"I don't care if he did get upset. He did his best to upset us, the mean thing! I never did like him and he's trying to get even with me because—"

M. d'Aillebout turned to Philippa.

"That is a foolish child," he said, impatiently. "The boy ran the risk of hurting himself that he might not hurt anyone else. He acted *en bon soldat*. I mean he acted as a soldier should have done, in the spirit of those brave boys who fought by our side so few of months ago. It was a gallant action. That, my Jean, is to be truly American. If you copy that as well as throwing of the ball you do well."

CHAPTER IX

“AS is very apt to be the case, the days following the great Saturday snow were very dull indeed. True, the elders of the Gale family had taken the matter of Jeff Randolph’s accident quite out of her hands; nevertheless, Philippa went every day to see how Jeff was. Mrs. Gale, who was home when her youngest came panting in, telephoned the Randolph house and was later told by a maid that Mr. Randolph had been notified; that the doctor had got there within fifteen minutes; that the French gentleman had remained with the boy until both Mr. Randolph and the doctor had reached the bedside; that Jeff was conscious, in some pain; and that they did not yet know how seriously he had been hurt.

There seemed to be nothing that Philippa could do. Moreover, the snow melted the next day and there was no more coasting.

“Just what you might expect of the old Washington weather,” Philippa said to her-

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self, in a general state of supreme displeasure with her lot. She knew she was puzzling everyone in the household, and that her mother was really bothered to see her at such loose ends. Nobody questioned her, however; it was a Gale theory that every member of a family had a right to some reserves. Philippa knew that she ought to shake herself out of her mood. But she couldn't. She was lonesome at home and she hated to go to school, knowing that she would have to see Anne and Virginia chumming together and feel that they didn't want her. It was all very well to know that they were being very foolish and ill-natured; it didn't make life any the less doleful.

All at once in the course of the unpleasant, sloppy walk to school, she stopped short. She squared her shoulders and lifted her head proudly.

"I'm too silly for anything to let Anne spoil everything for me," she said to herself. "I'm not going to, any longer. I had a fine time yesterday with the French officer and his funny little boy. There are lots of nice things to do. I'll play with some of the other girls." She hung up her coat and hat

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with the feeling that interesting things were going to happen.

Interesting things did happen. In the civics lesson Miss Holt, who came in to teach the class, asked what children had ever been sightseeing in their own city. The response to her question revealed a truly pitiable condition of ignorance, she said, of the things strangers came across the continent to see. Philippa was particularly ashamed of her own benighted condition. At lunch time she gravitated toward a group of girls who had been, with herself, most interested in the question. In a few minutes they were wondering what they could do about it. Philippa was soon so excited over the matter that it was quite as if it had been an important question with her all her life. The moment was propitious. They had been told the school would be closed the next day to allow the teachers to attend an Institute. It was evidently predestined that that holiday should be used for sightseeing. Philippa offered to lead them out of the wilderness of ignorance into the promised land of knowledge. Anne, her back turned to the excited group, was at some pains to express her indifference; Virginia looked at

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them with open envy. But Philippa was honestly oblivious of both. She was riding the hobby of a new idea.

When the matter was put up to the home authorities, there seemed to be no reasonable objection to the plan. Seven girls met at the car line equipped with money for car fare and for sandwiches somewhere on the way. Philippa was the proud possessor of a map of Washington, which she spread out solemnly in order to trace the perfectly well-known route to the Capitol. She was having a thoroughly good time. They attracted a good deal of attention in the car. They had dressed as far as their wardrobes would allow as tourists. One of the girls had unearthed a knapsack which she wore strapped upon her back.

"Perhaps people will think we are starting off on a cross-country hike," one of the girls whispered to Philippa.

"I'm sure I hope so," said Philippa, smartly.

They reached the Capitol at ten o'clock sharp. They "did" that augustly beautiful building in half an hour. It was not that they did not want to stay longer, but they were held sternly to schedule time.

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In that half hour they climbed to the dome and had a vision of a misty, opalescent dream city shimmering with sunlight that was trying to break through a gray sky. They saw the green-fringed river, the proud shaft of the Washington Monument, with the classic peace of the Lincoln Memorial beyond it. On the Virginia side of the river they were sure they made out the Lee home at Arlington. They saw white domes and dignified bulks of public buildings on both sides of the Mall, and they were fascinated by glimpses of shapely whiteness through the greenery in which the White House and the splendid group of public buildings on Seventeenth Street Southwest were set.

Then they scrambled down to see the Senate and House Chambers and the Supreme Court in session. That they were loath to leave because the story that a lawyer in a murder case, which was being tried, told a wild story of wild-West adventure that enthralled them. They paused to consider gravely the historical paintings in the corridors and to wander about Statuary Hall. They were rather puzzled to know just what they should think about that until Philippa's laughter over the concourse of

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ill-assorted marble gentlemen liberated their honest opinion and they were very witty indeed in the presence of haughtily unobservant sculptured "favorite sons" of many states.

The half hour Philippa had allotted to the Congressional Library repaid them well, for they met in the gorgeous white-marble and gold entrance corridor a family friend of the Gales who happened to be one of the officials of the Library. He was mightily amused at the sight of Philippa at the head of her cohorts and took them about himself. First he gave them an idea of the scope of the institution, the splendid collection of prints, the musical library, the manuscript division where a vast collection of public documents is being made: letters, diaries, public utterances of the leading men in the history of the United States. They were thrilled by seeing the exquisitely written letters of Washington, his methodical diaries, and scrupulously kept accounts when he was the general of the armies of the Continental Congress.

Then they were given a rapid survey of the beauties of the mural decorations which the best artists in the country had contributed,

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and saw how different the style was from that of the Capitol decoration. When they entered the Reading Room, in spite of the sign that commanded "Silence," they couldn't help soft "Oh-h-h's!" of wonder. And then Mr. Hunt explained to them that what gave the peculiar effect of joyous aspiration to the huge, domed room was a carefully thought out scheme in which color, material, workmanship had been combined to present a sort of symbol of all that was best in human intelligence. He showed them how the marble quarries of the whole world had been searched to produce the transition from deep rich brown of the columns to delicate cream, and then pointed out how the frescoes of the dome and the picture in the very top had combined spectrum colors until the effect was more radiant than mere daylight.

They were then taken to the desk and, to illustrate the truly marvelous system of book delivery—a device given to the Library by the builder, the late Bernard Green, a slip of paper was put in one of the pneumatic tubes which would deliver it at a desk near the proper bookstack. They put a book on one of the carriers hung on an endless chain,

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to be returned to a certain stack. Then they were conducted through wildernesses, story on story, of airy, clean bookstacks until they arrived in time to see the volume which they had started on its way delivered. It was almost impossible not to feel that the device had human intelligence. For they saw carrier after carrier, some with books in them, some empty, pass the place where they were waiting without stopping. But when the book they had seen placed in a carrier arrived, the wire basket, with a little click, tipped forward and deposited the volume they were waiting for neatly on the table before them.

“What’s the use of getting excited about ghost stories after that?” said Philippa as they filed out of the stacks again.

When they were clattering down the wonderful carved marble staircase on their way to the exit they halted to look at Elihu Vedder’s great mosaic of Minerva. A gentleman who passed them glanced from the artist’s conception of the clean vigor, richness, power latent in human intelligence, incarnate in a gracious woman’s figure which yet carried with it an atmosphere of knightly devotion, to Philippa, who had paused, spell-

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bound, to gaze, her face a flame of eager admiration.

"When that child grows up she's going to be very much the type," he said to his companion.

After they had walked by the Senate and House office buildings and had gone down the terrace to the foot of Capitol Hill, they paused to consider the further line of march. It was half past eleven; lunch began to seem desirable; they had much still to see.

"I think we'd better have lunch before we look at any more sights," said Philippa, decidedly. "I don't believe I could admire the most beautiful thing in the world now."

"Let's have lunch and then go to a movie and then go home," said Jessie Stewart, hopefully; she was too plump to be really enthusiastic about undue activity.

One or two of the others agreed with her, but most of the girls felt with Philippa that they were out to do sightseeing, not movies.

"Let's put all the lunch money together and see how much we've got," Philippa suggested. "I'm sure we all want to have about the same thing." When they had made a pool of dimes and nickles and a few quarters, Philippa considered it. "I think we ought to

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have two sandwiches apiece. Don't you?" They all agreed to that. "But then there won't be enough for anything sweet."

"I intended to have two sandwiches and a sundæ. I had money enough for that," said Jessie, in an aggrieved tone.

"Now look here! We are all going to have lunch at the same counter, aren't we?"

"Yes. Of course."

"And I don't think it would be a bit of fun to have some girls having sundæes and sodas and some girls not. I have an idea. We've all got car fare. If we save out one token to get home, won't we have enough for everyone to have some desert?"

"But then—"

"Yes, we'd have to walk from here to the Monument. But I, for one, can do it. And I'd rather."

There was a good deal of discussion, and it looked at one time as if the convention was going to break up in dissension. But Philippa was quite determined to put the plan through and finally she won over the majority to her side. "We'll go to a place I know where we can sit down, and we'll break the walk and get rested there." They all started off.

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They put two tables together at the little lunch room and had more fun over their lunch than if it had been a party planned for many weeks. Then, thoroughly rested, they formed in marching line, two and two, with Philippa like the captain, at the head, and started to walk down the wide Pennsylvania Avenue.

People turned to look at them as they passed. It was no wonder. Walking at a good swinging pace, their faces bright with interest, cheeks glowing and eyes bright, they were well worth looking at. Somehow, everything they passed that day seemed interesting, everybody seemed filled with good feeling.

In a short time they reached Fifteenth Street. They walked in front of the symmetrical Greek front of the Treasury, past groups of government employees hurrying back from lunch, past the Ellipse to where the Monument loomed ever more and more monstrous.

"You feel as if it would fall on you and crush you," Philippa said, as they stood almost under it.

"Shall we walk up or ride in the elevator?" asked Jessie Stewart, feebly. It was quite

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evident which way her inclinations would prompt her to take. The majority of the girls wanted to walk up. "It seems foolish to be carried up in an elevator," said Philippa. "I want to prove I can do it."

They started up the spiral stairs. At first they skipped up gayly, just to prove how easy it was. After the first hundred steps, however, they went more soberly, pausing to rest every two or three minutes. The special carved stones contributed by various states were an excellent excuse for lingering, defaced and chipped beyond recognition though most of them were. After two hundred steps they settled down doggedly to their task and Jessie Stewart began to complain bitterly. On and on they went, some of them straggling far behind, some of them keeping sturdily on. Five hundred steps found even Philippa willing to rest at stated intervals. The muscles of the calves of their legs and their knees felt benumbed. After seven hundred steps it required a sterner effort of the will than any of the girls had ever had to make before to keep them on. Philippa set her teeth together and went on. She had to stop every few minutes to get her breath down to its usual slow, regular

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measure. One thousand, she counted. She was beginning to see the light from above. She seemed all alone. She couldn't hear voices back of her. With a sense of triumph she pushed on. She came out into the little room at the top, staggering, too tired to stand up, but—first at the top!

It was a long time before the last girl, poor red-faced, exhausted Jessie Stewart, had stumbled up. After the first tiredness had oozed away it was glorious to rest and fill their eyes with gazing. The five hundred and fifty feet of the shaft gave them an incomparable view. The mists had all vanished; they saw much more than they had seen from the Capitol. Their vision swept out beyond the city to the country around it. They could distinguish the plan of the city with its avenues radiating from the Capitol. With everything leading to the Capitol when they looked to the east and their eyes attracted toward the Lincoln Memorial on the west, with the great shaft in which they were in the center, dedicated to Washington, a sense of the spirit and the meaning of their country began to thrill them.

“Oh, how wonderful it would have been if

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they could have kept the plan that Miss Holt told us L'Enfant had proposed, with wonderful buildings lining the Mall all the way from the Capitol!" Gertrude Tracy sighed.

When they were ready to go, not even Philippa was anxious to walk down. So they waited for the next trip of the elevator and went down in luxury, although it did make them a little nervous at first to think of dropping all that distance. When they were safely landed on the earth again they were very willing to consider the route home.

By this time they would have been only too glad to ride, but even if there were car fare enough there was no car line that would do them any good for some distance. So they trudged on as cheerfully as they could. They decided to take Seventeenth Street because that would take them past some of the most beautiful buildings in the city. They had little enthusiasm, however, when they passed the Corcoran Art Gallery, the D. A. R. Building. But the Pan-American Building Philippa insisted on diving into.

"We don't know when we will get here again, and we just ought to see that. Doreen said there isn't anything in the city like it." So they dragged their tired feet inside the

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portal and were glad they had. For, the minute they found themselves in the Court of the Fountain, with the tinkle of falling water, the tall palms about it, and the brilliantly colored parrots flying through their branches or making living pictures of flame of themselves as they sat motionless, they were in another world. There were comfortable seats to rest on while they feasted their eyes, and they found that refreshment of eyes and minds that comes from the unfamiliar thing.

“I don't believe I could have got to the car if we hadn't gone in there,” said poor Jessie as they stood waiting for the car that would take them out to the Park. When the car came—and, luckily, there were seats for them all—they settled themselves with great sighs of relief.

CHAPTER X

THAT night Philippa was too tired to go to sleep. Mrs. Gale, horrified at the immoderate amount of climbing the ambitious company had assigned itself for one day, put Philippa to bed after a hot bath and a good rubbing of her poor, aching legs. But even that didn't serve. Long after everybody in the house was in bed and asleep the child lay with wide-open eyes.

There were times, at long intervals, it is true, when Philippa's excitable temperament ran a bit ahead of her healthy body and she couldn't sleep. She had learned to dread those hours of wakefulness, for morbid terrifying thoughts were apt to torment her.

To-night, after reviewing in triumphant satisfaction all that they had accomplished during the day, and congratulating herself because she had proved that she could have a good time without Anne and Virginia, a wretched sense of loneliness and loss began to creep in. She couldn't banish it. For so

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long they had done everything together that the habit of associating them with everything she did made her, again and again, bring them into this crowded day also. And then she would be met again with a sense of blankness and loss when she remembered how things really were. A hundred times she felt an impulse—more—a longing to go to Anne and ask to make up. But she recoiled from the idea every time.

“It *isn't* that I am angry with her,” she vowed to herself. “But I wasn't the one that got angry, and if I try to make up first she will think I'm saying that I was. And it isn't fair.” Then she would turn restlessly over and try to go to sleep and forget it all. But she couldn't go to sleep.

This went on for hours, so when she awoke in morning, after about half of a night's rest, she was tired and heavy eyed. She was lame, too, of course. In short, she was thoroughly wretched. And, of course, that made her cross inside and very proper and dignified outside. The family was sympathetic, ignored her very apparent irritability, and Philippa got off to school without having in the least betrayed how she felt, she thought.

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She came home as unhappy as she had left. Fully half of the girls who had gone with her were not at school; the ones who were there were as tired and listless as herself. After the pleasure of impressing the other girls with their achievements of the day before was over, they weren't in the least interested with one another. Philippa's vivid imagination saw before her a lifetime of boredom with girls she didn't care for.

"If *this* is what life is going to be," she thought, gloomily "it certainly isn't much fun." This sort of thing went on for days. The family began to lose patience with her. Her mother spoke to her rather sharply about the necessity of pulling herself out of such a dismal mood. This seemed to do some good, Mrs. Gale thought, for she was outwardly more cheerful. She didn't come home from school until dinner time. Whether this meant that she had made up with Anne and Virginia the mother couldn't tell. She didn't want to ask. If there was some sore spot the child was trying to shield so it shouldn't be bruised again, she should be left alone. Mrs. Gale wouldn't pry. When Philippa was ready to tell her, the child would come of her own accord. But it

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was surprising how much the whole family was depressed while Philippa was hiding herself from them behind the cloud she herself had made.

One day, just after three o'clock, Mrs. Gale answered the phone in the living room. It was the voice of Mr. Randolph, Jeff's father.

"Has Philippa come home yet?"

"No, not yet." Mrs. Gale was rather surprised. She didn't know that Philippa knew Mr. Randolph.

"They don't answer the phone at the house and I don't know whether she has got there yet. I've been detained longer than I expected to be and I wanted to know whether to hurry home or not. I've usually been able to count on Philippa's being there at this time. I don't know what I would have done without her. She's been nothing short of a trump. The boy hasn't seemed to make friends here very readily. His mother's death, the change, everything, has been hard on him. Perhaps he's a bit difficult. But now he's flat on his back."

"Oh, but *what's* the matter? Has the doctor found out yet?"

"We can't tell yet; there is too much inflammation. The doctor doesn't know

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whether a ligament is strained or broken, or whether there is some more serious trouble. But we can't tell until they X-ray, and they can't do that until the inflammation goes down. Until then he must be kept absolutely quiet in bed. And it's been no easy job, with nobody but servants in the house—and stupid ones at that. I've had to be away a good part of every day. But that dandy little girl of yours jumped right in. Just as if she had been his sister. Almost a streak of the mother in—as if she knew how my little chap needed one.” The voice was momentarily unsteady. “She comes in after school every day and reads to the boy and plays games with him. She gets him to laughing, which is best of all. Yesterday I was held down at my office longer than I had expected and I was anxious to know whether she had got there or not. I couldn't get my own house. I'm afraid I haven't made you feel how grateful I am. Have a chance to tell you sometime.”

Mrs. Gale hung up the receiver, feeling altogether dazed. So this boy *was* another of Philippa's lame ducks. She had felt the boy's loneliness. It was the same impulse toward the hurt thing that had been with

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her almost since she was a baby. With her sure instinct the child had divined the ache in the heart of the motherless boy. She had felt he needed companionship. That was why she had tried to get him into the club. This was the "reason" she didn't give. She had had a scruple about betraying the solitary lad's need; it was a fine, delicate scruple for the girl to have had and hidden from them all.

It was natural that Mrs. Gale should have awaited Philippa's home-coming that day with more than usual impatience. She wanted to make amends for her own lack of understanding. And how warmly Jeff's father had spoken. In short, Mrs. Gale was in a glow of pride over her youngest—quite sentimental, in fact—and ready, by the time Philippa really did come, to place a crown upon her head or wings upon her shoulders or a *Croix de guerre* upon her sturdy breast.

It was unfortunate that Philippa could not have better played the center of the melodrama. She was tired and hungry and perhaps, in consequence, in a temper that was far from angelic.

"How did you find Jeff to-day?" Mrs. Gale opened the drama by inquiring, smilingly.

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There was an ungracious stare, Philippa apparently relinquishing unwillingly the idea that there was some sort of criticism in her mother's question.

"He's all right," she finally ejaculated, grumpily.

Slightly discomfited, but still determined to have her mother's meed of gloating over her child's superiority, Mrs. Gale said, gently:

"Mr. Randolph called me up, dear, and told what a help you had been to him. I was so glad to hear it."

"'S' nothing," Philippa replied, ungraciously. "Mother, isn't dinner ready yet? I'm starved."

"It won't be ready for quite half an hour yet." The mother was a little chilled in spite of herself. "You know we have dinner at half past six."

"Oh, but I *can't* wait until then. I'll die!" Philippa whined. "Can't I have a piece of cake or *something*? If I have to spend *every* afternoon trying to amuse Jeff—"

"No, you can't have anything to eat before dinner. And, dear, nobody is forcing you. I thought it was your own idea."

"Well, I'm just all talked out and laughed out and read out. I've told him everything

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that's been said in this family for the last year. He makes me tell everything we think, even; he seems to think we're a regular vaudeville show. I wish father told funny stories like Anne's father. But he never does. And I don't see that my talking does Jeff any good, either."

Mrs. Gale would have been ready to shake the heroine by this time if she hadn't detected something in the peevish tone that told the story of the long day that had strained the nerves of even a splendidly vigorous child like her own. And hadn't she, herself, suffered from the reaction after an act of unselfish kindness? Only she had grown wise enough to forestall it, so no one but herself knew the irritation.

"I'm sure it does Jeff good, sweetheart," she said, gently. "His father seems to think so, anyway. And I think if you'll go out to the kitchen and tell Mollie that *I* say so and that it's a *very* special occasion, maybe she'll give you a good, big piece of the chocolate cake that we're going to have for desert—"

"Gosh!"

"Philippa, I wish you wouldn't say 'Gosh.' It—"

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She was speaking to an empty room. With a whoop of delight the philanthropist had disappeared and could be heard clattering down the hall.

With a little smile, half tender, half humorous, on her lips, Mrs. Gale began to dress for dinner. As she dressed, her mind reverted to her husband. She wondered what news he would bring back this evening. When he had left in the morning it had been with an interview in prospect that he hoped great things for. But then, her husband was always so optimistic. The Senator with whom he had an appointment was a member of the Post Office Committee that had his bill for the readjustment of postmasters' salaries in its hands. Two of the five Senators were in favor of reporting the bill favorably, two were in all probability opposed. This man, Redfern of Kansas, was doubtful. Mrs. Gale sighed a little as she did her hair the way the family liked it.

CHAPTER XI

ABOUT eight o'clock one evening, several days later, the telephone bell rang, startlingly loud in a quiet house. Mrs. Gale answered from the living room. The door was open, so Philippa, trying to fasten her attention on the Constitution, heard plainly her mother's responses:

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Randolph! . . . That's good. . . . And Jeff? . . . I'm sure it's an anxious time, but I hope— . . . Yes, Philippa's here. . . . Oh—I don't know just how she would feel about it. . . ."

Philippa pricked up her ears. Her mother's tone warned her that something debatable was being proposed. She was sure it related to her.

"Why, I really can't say, Mr. Randolph. . . . Yes, I understand just how you feel. . . . Yes, yes, I know"—her voice lowered sympathetically—"but—she *had* been counting on the family dinner here with us. It really means so much to us all, with Bayard home. . . . Yes, yes, I know just how it must be.

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We would all want to do anything. I'll just have to ask Philippa herself. I couldn't possibly decide the question for her."

Philippa, huddled over her book, looked up at her mother as if she were warding something off.

"I know just what you're going to tell me, mother," she said accusingly. "I knew just as soon as you said his name. I might have known that's what would happen. He wants me to come there to have Thanksgiving dinner with him and Jeff. Oh, mother, I can't! I just can't! I've been thinking about it for *days*. So jolly with Bayard home and everything. I can't give it up!"

Mrs. Gale wondered at the intensity of grief in the child's face.

"Why, dear, if you feel that way about it nobody will force you to go. I can't bear the thought of it, myself. It's only that he seemed to feel it would help them. And the boy wants you so. It *is* sad for them. Think of it—the first holiday time since Jeff's mother left them. I couldn't help feeling sorry for him. I tell you"—she had the air of having an inspiration—"perhaps we can have them both here. Jeff could be brought down in an automobile."

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Philippa shook her head despairingly.

"He can't be moved, not a bit, until they take the X-ray and know what's the matter. They've been waiting for the swelling to go down. They're going to use the X-ray thing the day after Thanksgiving, Jeff said."

Mrs. Gale had a moment's vivid realization of what it would mean if one of her children was where Jeff was and they were all waiting in suspense to know whether there was some hideous malady lurking that would mean suffering, lameness, deformity. She covered her eyes. The thought was too horribly real.

"Mother, you don't think I'll have to go?"

"Dear child, I can't decide for you. And we will all feel as badly to have you away as you will to go. Nobody could blame you if you felt you couldn't."

Philippa's rosy face grew very serious. Her mouth set itself and her downy brows knit. For a moment the child was very still. Then, with an evident effort, she spoke:

"There's nothing else to do. I'll have to go."

"Perhaps—" her mother began, hopefully.

"No. There isn't any 'perhaps.' It

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wouldn't be square of me not to do it. If you're a friend you've got to act like one. I'll tell him now." She got up with a resolution that any sorely tried grown-up might have envied.

"Wait a minute, dear. There ought to be some way to arrange it. Why, yes! How stupid of me not to have thought of it before! All we've got to do is to arrange different hours for dinner. And you can go from one to the other. I'm sure Mr. Randolph will adapt his plans to ours. Or Mollie won't mind changing when she knows. Which dinner would you rather have come first? Of course the second turkey won't taste just the same."

"Oh, why didn't we think of that before? We must have ours last. I won't much mind ours being the second turkey, though I suppose you can't have quite the same feeling about the second one on the same day. I'll only eat a little of Jeff's. I *had* been thinking about seeing Mollie bring him—the turkey—in and know it was *our* Thanksgiving. But the most important thing that I just can't miss is to sit around the fire after dinner and everybody talk. Oh, mother, you'll tell Bayard he mustn't tell any stories about

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football or the fellows until I get home. Will you promise?"

"Yes, dear." Mother was watching the life and color and happiness coming back to Philippa's bright face. "And, dear me, you'll be the gay member of the family this time—quite like the people the society editor makes her living out of—having to go from one dinner to another."

"Won't it be *fun!*" Philippa's fancy immediately dramatized the situation. She adjusted upon her face what she fondly fancied to be the languid regard of the socially beleaguered and minced affectedly to the phone, the little finger of her right hand, for some occult reason, ostentatiously curled out. Then she stopped and burst into a peal of laughter at her own foolishness.

"All the same, mother, I *did* decide to go before we thought of this, didn't I? And you believe I would have gone if there hadn't been any fun in it at all, and if I had missed the whole dinner with us all?" she asked a little wistfully.

"I'm sure you would, sweetheart," Mrs. Gale answered, softly. And she stood, a tender smile on her face, while Philippa called the Randolphs' number and, in her

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fresh, joyous, little-girl voice suggested the arrangements they had just planned. Evidently there was nothing on Mr. Randolph's side but eager agreement. After that, as it was evidently quite impossible for the child to get her lessons, Mrs. Gale sent her to bed. Then she had a most agreeable half hour rehearsing the little scene to her husband and scheduling, one by one, the several qualities that made Philippa quite different from any other child. Mothers *are* foolish, sometimes, just like their daughters.

CHAPTER XII

PHILIPPA had her wish and went with Mr. Gale and Doreen to meet Bayard the night before Thanksgiving. It would have been a thrilling thing just to have the brilliant night ride down the Avenue with its flashing electric signs, and walk into the huge station with its harmonious vastness and its echoing arch. The sight of throngs of travelers moving here and there, the porters carrying bags, the sense of movement and the mystery of the lives out of which all these people came and into which they would go, all these were an intoxication to her. Her head high and with dreaming eyes she followed the older ones.

They found they had not long to wait, so they took their stations by the gates. In a very few minutes the gates were opened and the first comers from the incoming train began to trickle through. They came on and on, a heavy stream now. It began to seem a very long time to the child and she

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grew nervous. What if Bayard, after all, had missed his train?

Striding along, his head above every other in the throng, and his face decorated with an expansive grin that showed almost every one of his strong white teeth, Bayard was making sweeping gestures to them from the midst of the crowd. As soon as he got through the gate he seized Doreen and Philippa in a simultaneous, comprehensive hug through which he managed to retain a heavy Gladstone bag, a big box of candy, magazines, and a raincoat. This done, he looked dangerously near hugging his father, too, but desisted just in time, and pumped his father's hand up and down for a beaming minute instead.

"One of fifty-seven varieties of nice things about you, Bayard," Doreen laughed, "is that you never find it necessary to pretend you're not glad to see your family."

The grin widened a bit.

"But where's mother?" he demanded. "Nothing wrong?"

"No, indeed. I think she felt Mollie hadn't done full justice to your room."

They turned back. Nobody could quite tell why it was that the world always seemed

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suddenly gilded when Bayard appeared. Big and exuberant and brimming with funny big-boy—and little-boy—larkishness as he was, something more than the instinctive optimism of the glad young animal entered the room with him—a sunny peace. Mr. Gale had held the theory that every growing boy should have, if possible, some years of his life in large open spaces and should know something of the frontier struggle with the forces of nature. For this reason Bayard had spent two years of his short life on a ranch in the Northwest. The result had been not only that fine breadth of shoulder and splendid muscle had been developed to balance his great height, but that something of the calm power of great mountains and wide valleys and of the God of the far horizon had possessed the boy's soul.

So it happened that when Bayard was home most of the family perplexities sooner or later received his cheerful young verdict. The merely mechanical details that had gone wrong about the house since he was last there required no explanation; as a matter of course, the morning after his arrival he made his way about the house in the soft-footed deliberate pace that Doreen called

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his "cowboy lope," seeking out trouble which he dealt with on the spot, showing an intimate acquaintance with things mechanical and with electric wires that seemed nothing short of uncanny to the other members of the household. As for less material puzzles, they were known to him because he was so one with them all that there was no reason for not thinking aloud in his presence.

Thus, he knew all about Jeff in the first few minutes of his little sister's conversation, all about the quarrel with Anne and Virginia and about the little empty aching feeling in her heart which the rest of the family had not divined, privately thinking that Philippa's apparent contentment separated from her chums showed her to be a little callous. While awaiting the opportunity to see what he could do about this little emotional short circuit, Bayard was gravely attentive to the more obvious claim upon sympathy of the injured boy, and finally suggested that he go with Philippa to see the kid.

So when the child started out for her first Thanksgiving dinner on the sunshiny, sharp, November day, Bayard went with her to the

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Randolphs' house. Without being conscious of it, Philippa held her head very high and swung her shoulders with a decided swagger. She was very proud of her big, splendid-looking brother; she felt it increased her importance to be seen with him. People always turned and looked at him in the street, and, although she was devoted to him on grounds quite independent of the popular verdict, she still could not help having her good opinion of Bayard heightened by all this.

They were shown into Jeff's room and there they found a white and shining little round table set at the side of his bed. Mr. Randolph had made an effort to give an effect of festival to the room by bringing home a great bunch of gorgeous red roses. But otherwise the room, handsome as the furniture had been intended by its manufacturers to be, might have been a room in any expensive hotel. The efforts of the maid to do the honors of the occasion had merely led her to put everything that indicated use away. So, although Jeff's eyes were bright with anticipation, and the dressing gown they had slipped his arms through was a luxurious one for a boy, he looked forlorn enough to Bayard. Perhaps it was the hands

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lying inertly on the coverlid that most touched Bayard's heart. His weeks in bed had already made Jeff's hands so unboyishly clean and delicate.

Jeff regarded the older boy's six-feet-one of muscular lithe strength with the hangdog look which Bayard understood meant shyness. The admiration took on a bitter tinge of envy which was, perhaps, not remarkable when one considered that Jeff was awaiting the verdict which would decide whether any of the sports—the only thing in life that a normal boy thinks really worth while—would ever be possible to him. But Bayard saw to it that he didn't feel that way long. The big chap sat down on the foot of the bed so carefully as not to jar in the least the boy who lay there so helplessly. Bayard had a controlled deftness of motion that moved his great bulk with the delicate precision of a well-oiled and perfectly adjusted machine.

With insight that came naturally from recollections of his own not far distant boyhood, Bayard talked mainly about college sports. But the tact that made him dwell chiefly on returned A. E. F. boys, temporarily laid up with wounds, who had "come back" and proved themselves stars in football or

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track, was Bayard's own special gift. So it happened that in the few minutes he lingered by the boy's bedside Bayard made Jeff laugh many times and left a look of eager interest in his face that had not been there when he came.

Then the youngest Gale scion took up the task that the eldest had begun. Lacking Bayard's peculiar endowment, she yet brought certain gifts. For one thing, sitting at the table with the two masculine beings, child as she was, Philippa brought something of the womanly touch they had been without so many dreary meals. When her coat was off Jeff's eyes had widened a little at the pretty frock it disclosed. He could not know, of course, that Mrs. Gale had just fashioned it out of Doreen's old yellowed graduation dress, that it was the dye pot and much planning and skillful fingers that had wrought it, and that it was only at the very last that some benign witchery seemed to have taken possession and turned the style, that their own limitation of material had made necessary, into just the most becoming lines that a girl of Philippa's age and build could wear. It had turned out a really lovely blue, neither dark nor very light, but as joyous as

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summer skies. There were delicate ruffles of white chiffon around the neck and short sleeves and a white satin sash that was first veiled and then revealed in a way that was wholly mysterious to the male beings, but that Mrs. Gale knew only too well the reasons for. But the whole effect of the simple but gracious lines and the softly pretty textures was to turn Philippa from a healthy little girl into a tall, girlish prophecy of charming young ladyhood.

How much of the shade of deference that crept into the manner of both the Randolphs that day was due to that frock neither they nor Philippa will ever know. But she vaguely sensed it and definitely responded to it. And she most certainly enjoyed it. With truly admirable restraint she contrived to eat only just enough of the Randolph turkey to convince both father and son that she was enjoying it. As she chattered on, making little unconscious dramas of the manifold small happenings of her life, dramas that were often tinged with humor as well as the instinctive artistically effective, she was like a vividly companionable fire on the long-cold hearth of this father and son. So the realization that she was interesting them went to

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her head a bit, and her color heightened, and words and incidents came more and more easily. Still, when the time came for her to go, she realized that she really could not have held out much longer. She had told them about everything she knew. But she was quite sure that neither one had guessed it. So she made her departure with as comfortable a sense of having been a success as any well-established queen of the footlights. It was only at the very last, when she said good-by to Jeff, that a wistfulness that would have made the boy disgusted with himself could he have seen it in his own eyes, sent her rather pensively away.

When she got back to her own house she found the family just going in to dinner. And it was so good to be with her own people that, when Mollie brought in the big brown turkey and put it down before Mr. Gale the miracle was accomplished: It was as if no dinner had gone before it! Moreover, the real scene was every bit as good as her anticipations had made it. That alone was enough to make Philippa long remember that Thanksgiving dinner.

After the honest pleasure of eating good things in company with a jubilant tableful

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of happy family, after the annual exhumation of all the ancient Gale jokes, greeted with as uproarious laughter as though any one of the hearers could not have recounted it in as exact detail as the one who happened to have got to it first, after a genial but quieter sense of well-being had settled down on them with the nuts and raisins and bonbons, there fell the first pause. It lasted a long time; nobody, apparently, was ready to fill it. Exchanging glances, they began to wonder at it. Then seeing father, a little grave, exchange a glance with mother, the children began to realize that something was coming. Philippa even felt oddly alarmed.

CHAPTER XIII

“YOUR mother and I thought we would take advantage of Bayard being home to lay some matters before you all. Since every one is vitally concerned in them, it seems only right that you should all have an opportunity to understand and to give your opinion.”

Philippa, seeing Bayard looking intently at his father, and Doreen unusually serious, began to feel a little frightened. But she was more interested than frightened when her father began, very simply, but with as much seriousness as though he were laying a case before a court:

“You all know that I have been trying to enforce payment to my clients in the Postmasters’ Compensation Claims.”

Philippa settled back in acute disappointment. She had thought it was going to be something new and interesting. And it was nothing but the same old postmasters’ claims that she had heard about ever since she was

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born! And, as far back as she could remember, she had always closed up her ears when her father began to talk about them.

“I think you ought to know something about the claims. Many years ago, certain parts of the West and Southwest were very thinly settled. Post offices were often established for hamlets of a few widely scattered homes. In such cases, country postmasters were appointed at tiny salaries; a country storekeeper or farmer had a few boxes set up in his house and acted as postmaster, in some cases for ten or twenty dollars a month.

“But all that country was at the beginning of great expansion. There were discoveries of oil and minerals; boom towns grew overnight. The postmaster, you know, is under oath to discharge the duties of his office; the term of office was for two years. These men who were being paid one or two hundred dollars a year had a sudden increase of duties that made their work ten times as exacting. Many of them had to neglect their other employments, hire additional office room, have additional boxes made, employ assistants. When they wrote to Washington asking to be relieved of their duties, their resignations were not acted on. They were forced

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by law to discharge their duties until a successor should be appointed at the expiration of their term of service.

“One of these cases was put into my hands for collection by a man I used to know. I took the matter up with the department here and secured a reasonable settlement with very little difficulty. As soon as the news spread, other cases began to pour in on me. Now I have several thousands of these cases. As soon as the department realized that a million dollars, at least, was involved in these claims, they refused to settle. It was necessary to get legislation through Congress. I have now been working on this for ten years. Sometimes the bill has been passed by one House, but not by the other, before the expiration of that Congress. Then I would have to begin all over again.

“The bill has good friends in the House of Representatives, and last session it passed. Unless it passes the Senate this session and is signed by the President it may be pretty hard sledding ahead for the Gale family. You see, I am working for a contingent fee. I feel that the chances are fairly good, but there can be no certainty. It may take years to get the bill through. I may never

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get it through. Most of the capital I had when I began has been spent. I have given up almost all other law business for this. There has been much expense, a large force of clerks, postage, family budget. I am beginning to feel the pinch. I will probably feel it more in the future. And your mother and you children will be affected by this. You will have to go without many things you want; some things, perhaps, that you need.

"Recently a very good offer has been made to me. I can be the legal adviser for the Washington branch of a big corporation. That will mean a settled income and a fairly good one. But it will also mean giving up the postmasters' cases. What do you children think about it?"

Bayard, whose clear eyes had not left his father's face, was the first to speak:

"As a business proposition it is the settled, limited thing against the gamble."

"That's it. I couldn't have put it better myself."

"What do you yourself want to do?"

Mr. Gale waved that question aside a little impatiently.

"It is *your* opinion I want now, not my own."

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"Then—you believe that these claims are just, don't you?"

"Absolutely just." Mr. Gale spoke eagerly.

"How confident do you feel about the result—sometime?"

"I think I can succeed. Though perhaps I'm too sanguine. But—you must think of it as being very uncertain."

"But it's the *big* thing, isn't it?" It was quiet Doreen who asked this question. But it was a Doreen whose eyes were too bright to look especially quiet at this moment.

"Yes, but it's only a chance." Mr. Gale's insistence was becoming a little nervous.

"Then I believe in the bigger thing always." The bright color had come into her face. "You never get anywhere if you tie yourself down to the cowardly, settled, sure thing. You've got to take a chance."

"Now wait a bit, Doreen, until you understand."

"Our Ethics course starts out with the proposition that we ought to be governed by the 'greatest good of the greatest number,'" Bayard said, smiling. "How does this work out by that standard?"

"Not much question there." Mr. Gale smiled a little painfully. "Don't you sup-

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pose I've fought all this ground over many times? There are thousands of these poor old fellows who lost one or two years' work right out of their lives, and many of them had to go into debt to pay for having the government's business carried on. And that from a class that, necessarily, could ill afford to lose it. If I give up the cases, I doubt if anyone else will carry them on; while if I take this job, I'll do nothing but help increase, perhaps, the dividends of an already too prosperous concern—although it's a fairly decent concern as corporations go. But my first thought ought to be for my family. If I were alone, of course— But there! that's bosh!"

"Yes, but if you *were* alone?"

"Why then— But one has no right to argue on an impossible basis."

"But if you *were*?"

"There's no question. By my soul, I'd stick to those fellows until they got every penny due them." There was a sudden flash in Mr. Gale's blue eyes; his strongly jutting profile had an eaglelike power.

"Then that settles it. I'd stick to the postmasters."

"Oh, do, dad. It's so much more interesting." Doreen's eyes were shining.

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"But I'm *not* alone, and you youngsters don't understand what it may mean. A tough grind if the bill doesn't go through this year, even. And beyond that—I can't see you all suffer. You don't really know what it is to go without necessary things—"

Philippa, whose eyes had been moving from one to the other of the speakers, could contain herself no longer.

"Oh, Gosh!"

"Philippa, please don't say 'Gosh.'"

"No'm, I won't."

"Is it going to be put off any *longer*? Ever since I can remember we have been saying: 'When the postmasters' bill passes'—'When our ship comes in'—'When we get our fortune.' I've played I'm going to have that fortune so long that I'm just sick and tired of it!" Her voice rose in a wail and the tears were not far away. "I think it would be just wonderful to have a regular income and know what we *could* do. I'm so tired of saying 'if' all the time. Just yesterday I asked mother if I could have a new coat next winter and she said, 'If the bill goes through.' Oh, please do decide to have a regular income, father."

Mrs. Gale was regarding her with as-

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tounded eyes in which there was yet some sympathy. Mr. Gale eyed his youngest in perturbation. That view was so eminently sensible, but so opposite to what one would have expected from Philippa. It was confusing. He could not resist.

“But, dear child, I get letters every day from these men. Some of them are quite old and very poor. I’m—I’m afraid I am responsible for their being sure that they were going to get their money. A hundred or so is a large sum to them. They can’t understand the delay when they know their cause is just. They believe so in the government. It can’t do wrong. A letter I got to-day made me feel badly. It’s just the usual story of poverty and disappointment, I suppose. But it broke me all up. The man’s wife had been ill. It took all the money he could earn—more than their mere living—for medicine and doctors’ bills. The interest on his little farm would be due in three months. The man who had lent the money to him wanted his corner of land and would foreclose in a day if the interest wasn’t paid. ‘Seems like it would have been better if you hadn’t raised my hopes about getting the claim through at all,’ this man, Jeb Smth, wrote

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me, 'if I've got to be disappointed after all. It just don't seem hardly right when I've worked as hard as I knew how.'" Mr. Gale's voice was a little unsteady. He had been carrying for many months a heavy burden, and there were days when the simple reiteration of such appeals almost unmanned him.

"Oh, father!" Philippa's eyes were bright with tears. "I didn't think of it *that* way—about people like us, you know. Of *course*, I want you to get the money for that poor man. It doesn't make a bit of difference about my new coat or anything. I can perfectly well wear my old one. I'll take exercises so I won't get too big for it."

Bayard pinched her cheek with a laugh that somehow 'made everything all jolly and funny again,' as Philippa put it to herself.

"Now, you see, father," he said, "the last obstacle has been removed. There isn't any reason in the world why you shouldn't take a chance. All the reasons that count are for it. And, gee whizz! I'll tell the world you've got somebody back of you. You know, if the bottom drops out of things for a time, I'm perfectly capable of earning a pretty decent pay envelope right now if I

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stopped college this very day. I tested myself out that time we got stranded out in Montana, you know, when your check was missent. Didn't I pull down my eight dollars a day unloading freight, and without sweating any too much, either? I'd like to know why the Gale family can't take a flyer if it wants to. I'd be the worst kind of a slacker if I couldn't come to the front if there was any need for it. It 'd be a whole lot more fun, anyway, than driving my old bean so hard along midyears that I've had a regular hot box up there—or so it seems about that time. No, Ancestor, the sum isn't going to come out according to the answer in the back of the book if you leave Son out of it." The spread-eagle attitude he struck made Philippa giggle. But nobody underestimated the solid truth of what he said, for all that.

"And I could get a position if I just had a course in a business college." Doreen looked particularly like a descendent of all the Vere de Veres as she made this practical suggestion. "I've always thought it would be *more* fun to earn your own living."

Philippa was fearfully jealous.

"Everybody else can do things and I

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can't, because you'll say I have to stay in school."

The pathos in her tone didn't prevent Mrs. Gale from speaking with some significance. It was the first time she had entered verbally into the discussion.

"If you'll only think about your clothes a little the next time you feel inclined to shin up a rough tree, I'd be a wealthy woman with what I'd save out of my allowance."

The hearty laugh that went up was welcome to everybody but Philippa, whose hurt dignity demanded sulks for a moment. They were all wholesomely Anglo-Saxon enough to dislike any undue indulgence of emotion. And Mr. Gale had, if the truth were known, felt a little more emotion at several stages of the discussion than was quite comfortable. He had been feeling that he and his wife had been bearing their heavy burden alone. And all at once Youth itself, an exhaustless reservoir of power, had offered itself! He was rising from the table with that rather vague glance around the range of familiar objects that one has, for a time, forgotten, with which one comes back to the things of common day, when Bayard said, low in his ear:

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"Honest, Ancestor, tell me the honest-to-goodness truth. If your three noble children had voted in a block against the Pathetic Postmasters, *would you have given them up?*"

Mr. Gale started—looked indignant—wavered. A look of perfectly absurd conviction of guilt fastened itself finally on his face. Bayard broke into a laugh of sheer delight. Quite ignorant of the cause, they all joined in.

"Well, anyway," Bayard finally was sobered down enough to say, "I'm not going to take the position of Atlas supporting the earth—not as a permanency."

CHAPTER XIV

“NOW what are we going to do about Anne and Virginia?”

Bayard sat cozily down beside Philippa. He had found her alone on the davenport in the living room, gazing drearily into a dying fire. And so, in Bayard's own manner, he set briskly to the rescue.

Philippa, as was her way when anything that hurt was touched upon, looked cross.

“I don't care anything about—” she had begun when Bayard interrupted, laughing good-humoredly.

“Now let's cut out all the diplomatic notes, Pip, and get down to business. You know you want to be friends.”

All at once Philippa's eyes filled with tears. She made no effort to conceal them or wipe them away, but just looked dumbly at her brother, her wide eyes brimming over.

Bayard squeezed her hand, but in a brief and business-like fashion.

“All right. Now we'll just sketch out a plan of campaign. First item: You've tried

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to get Jeff into the club and failed, making Anne and Virginia angry to boot."

Philippa nodded, reaching for a handkerchief.

"How about giving up that proposition?"

Philippa shook her head stubbornly.

"It isn't only that I hate to give up having my own way," she explained, frankly, to Bayard's clear eyes; "it's that I told Jeff I'd do it. And it doesn't seem right, now that he's all lamed up and all, to back out."

Bayard nodded thoughtfully. And he was not acting a part. He *was* interested. He knew how much the two girls meant to his little sister. And he was not contented to do the easy thing of dismissing the matter as merely a childish squabble. With the same absorbed interest as when he peered into some bit of complex mechanism in order to restore a lost contact, he was bent on straightening out this muddle. It was not a small thing to Philippa.

"I can see that. But are you sure Jeff, himself, wants it?"

Philippa's face set itself in stubborn lines.

"I don't know whether he does or not. But he ought to. He oughtn't to be by himself so much. He needs—"

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"That's the right idea. But, if I remember how I felt 'way back there, it wasn't the girls that I wanted to keep me from being lonely."

"But he won't get acquainted with the boys! And they don't seem to understand him. And if they *won't* play together I can't make them, and it isn't right for him not to be with somebody besides his father and—"

"I see. You couldn't boss the boys, but you thought you could the girls. And then you found you couldn't?" Bayard's eyes laughed so engagingly that Philippa laughed back in spite of herself. "But let's see if we can't find some way out of this that, by yielding some points that you don't care very much about, will gain what you consider really essential. That's 'diplomacy,' if you want to know it, alias 'compromise' And all of the really clever people like ourselves resort to it occasionally. Let me tell you, young woman"—Bayard fell into an absurd declamatory tone—"every really great man, who has ever been able to put over any part of an ideal, has had to resort to this method. Otherwise he bangs his head against a stone wall. Lincoln was the most skillful compro-

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miser the political world has ever seen, as well as the greatest idealist. He—" Here he broke off and laughed. "But that isn't arranging our program, is it?"

He had, however, accomplished just what he wanted. The sparkle of intelligent interest, the fascination of a dawning idea, was in the face that had been so dull and downcast a minute before.

"Gosh! Let's arrange it right away," Philippa ejaculated, in businesslike tones.

"Pip, I wouldn't say 'Gosh' if I were you, It doesn't sound—"

"All right, I won't."

"Well *and* good." Bayard reached for tablet and pencil. "We'll put down first the irreducible minimum."

Philippa was looking at him with eyes of blank amazement.

"It's a shame to unload on you all the debating society tricks I know," Bayard confessed, laughing. "What I mean is, what you consider absolutely necessary. What you can't give up without hurting something deeper than your pride."

"'Irreducible minimum.' I'll use that on Anne and Virginia. Won't they be surprised." Then she considered thoughtfully.

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"I do want to help make Jeff feel that people like him and want to play with him," she said at last. "And"—at that the quick tears came again into her eyes—"I do want to make friends with Anne and Virginia."

"Of course you do." He patted her hand softly. "And I'll bet they want to make friends with you—good and plenty. Take it from me: I've found that whatever affects me usually affects the other fellow, too. But they don't know how to make friends. And you don't, either, without giving up a principle that means much to you. That's what we have to find out. There's just no sense at all in holding out just because the other fellow doesn't move first. *It isn't the weaker person that moves first in such a case. It's the cleverer.*"

Philippa's eyes were sparkling.

"I see! It's the one who can think out the way."

"Just that."

"Well, hurry now, while I've got you to help me. It's my part to start first because they haven't anyone like you to help them." Philippa nodded complacently. "Anne's brother never pays any attention to her and Virginia's cousins are nuts."

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"Pip, it certainly is a comfort that you don't have to be knocked down and trampled on before an idea permeates. Some girls are such boneheads—especially the pretty ones." Bayard's gratitude was only slightly exaggerated. "Now! How much are you willing to give up provided you can accomplish the irreducible minimum?"

Philippa didn't have to stop to think. "Everything," she said.

"Good stuff! Then we can reckon without relying on Anne's giving up one single thing."

Philippa looked doubtful at this.

"I don't see why?" she began.

"*Knowing that she's doing it, I mean.* She'll stand still, but we will execute a flank movement so she'll have to turn. Suppose you give up the idea of taking Jeff into that special club. He'd never attend it, anyway—one boy with a lot of girls! Then start another and let the first one die if you're not interested in it. Have the real club one for boys and girls together. Have the purpose of it something both boys and girls can really be interested in. What's Jeff specially strong in?"

"He knows a lot about the government—

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about Congress and the President's powers and all that."

"That's hot stuff! Start a Young Citizens club, to discuss the rights and duties of citizens. That's a particularly interesting subject here because, while the District has the commission form of government and is really governed by Congress, there's a strong movement for the suffrage and some other form of government. I'm not saying the Young Citizens club would be a good thing for you kids just because of the Jeff issue, understand. There's nothing that's more necessary than to wake people up everywhere to take an intelligent interest in the way they're being governed and insist on having the voice in local and national affairs that they should have. It's because the great majority of our people don't care anything about the way the government's run that a lot of corrupt machine politicians are running it solely for their own benefit. Look at the trouble dad's having to get a lot of poor chaps paid back the money that the government practically stole from them! Could that happen if the kind of men were in Congress that would be there if they really represented *all* the people? It makes

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me sick to think we've got about seventy-five per cent of do-nothing fatheads in this country throwing away the suffrage it took—beginning back where the struggle for it really began, in England—centuries to gain! And that is true because they haven't been trained from the beginning to use intelligently the weapon they've got right in their hands. So let's begin from the beginning, right here, to train ourselves. How about the Young Citizens idea?"

"Oh, Bayard, it's just what I'd like! But I don't know how to start it."

"Have a party."

"I'd love a party. But I don't think that I ought to ask mother. We're not going to ask her for anything unnecessary because—you know—until the bill passes."

"That's all right. I've got a little money of my own. Made it tutoring. If it was a lot of men, now, that we wanted to get hold of, it would have to be a dinner. Then I *would* have to go down into my jeans. But if I remember my distant youth, a gallon or so of ice cream and some cakes and somebody's house make a party."

"Oh yes! Sometimes we have cocoa instead of ice cream."

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“Oh, Age of Innocence! You make me feel like a battered man of the world. Not that cocoa isn't good stuff. See that you save me some ice cream if I'm here. I'll fix it up with mother and father. This is going to be just *too* easy. That Morgan kid and Lawrence Tracy made me promise I'd coach their team this morning. I'm due there in a few minutes. They're frightfully impressed with my condescension—a member of a real 'varsity team—so it'll be just the chance to put 'em wise to the Jeff situation. You'll see they'll cry for him. Now *that's* fixed up. Oh, wait a minute, there's mother. It's all right, muzz.” Mrs. Gale's face appeared at the door. “I'm going to get those plugs just as soon as I finish showing the kids some simple passes—football. We'll have those cellar lights on this evening. 'By, Pip. I'll stop on my way home and see what the X-ray sharps say about your wounded friend.”

And, whistling, Bayard made his deliberate progress out of the house.

CHAPTER XV

BUT Philippa did not have to wait until Bayard came home to know about Jeff. About eleven o'clock she was called up on the phone. It was Mr. Randolph.

"Jeff wants to know if you can come over."

"When?" Philippa's heart was beating hard.

"The sooner the better, I should say."

"All right. What did the—?" But Mr. Randolph had hung up.

"Did his voice sound glad or sorry?" Philippa wondered, as she walked the short distance to the Randolphs' big Colonial house. "I couldn't tell. It just sounded excited." She, herself, must have been a little excited, for by the time the wooden-faced maid had opened the door for her her knees were trembling. Philippa's imagination, sometimes an asset, was often a painful liability. She had rehearsed all sorts of scenes before she got to the door of Jeff's room. Jeff had been told that his leg couldn't

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be cured—it would have to be amputated. He wanted her to help him bear the blow. Perhaps they would want her to hold his hand while it was being done.

“I can't do *that*. I want to help, but I can't do *that*,” she was saying, with her hand on the knob. Her round face was actually white and her eyes were full of sensitive tears.

It was a very jolly-faced boy who faced her when she opened the door. And Mr. Randolph came smiling from the adjoining room which was his study. Jeff was propped up high in the bed; his crimson dressing gown was a gorgeous bit of color. On a stand by the bed was a green-and-gold china bowl full of ruddy fruit, and a tall cake with icing an inch thick. There was also a big box which Philippa's prophetic soul knew contained candy. There were some interesting-looking fish-hooks. Altogether, if it was true that Jeff was to be a helpless invalid for life, it was evident that he was prepared to enjoy his invalidism.

His black eyes were brilliant with animation and his wide grin rivaled Bayard's special pattern.

“The doctor guy got here early—two of

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'em," he rattled off in a conspicuously off-hand manner, as soon as his father had gone back to his study. "And their old machine showed 'em there wasn't anything more than a torn ligament the matter with me. Father arranged so they could develop the picture and print it right away. It was really pretty good fun; they explained the whole business to me. So to-morrow they're coming to do my leg up in a plaster thing. I'll have to keep still for about a week and then I can hobble around a little if I keep the cast on and don't bend my leg at all and am very careful. But then it's their long suit to tell you to be 'careful.' And now—oh, would you mind ringing? They're going to bring something up as soon as I ring for it. Father said I could have anything I wanted to help celebrate. I couldn't really enjoy Thanksgiving dinner with this thing hanging over." Then, as he heard steps coming, he gabbled hurriedly and surreptitiously: "I wanted you to know it first. You've—you've been *dandy*. I thought we'd have a little party all to ourselves."

The wooden-faced maid appeared carrying a platter on which was a mold of the most wonderful ice cream. Philippa could see

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that the creamy part had marrons in it, and she closed her eyes in ecstasy. She did so love marrons in ice cream. And there were strawberry and chocolate, too—just the mixture she liked best.

The impassivity of the wooden-faced maid was broken for a minute as she saw Philippa's face; something like a smile twitched at the corners of her mouth. Then Philippa felt still more happy. She was so used to Mollie, who shared in all the family interests, that the properly trained domestic automaton filled her with discomfort. It seemed horrid to have people do things for you who were not fond of you.

The ice cream was set down on the stand by the cake. Plates and forks were produced, supplemented with spoons at Jeff's order. Then the maid withdrew and the two children were left to themselves, with no grown-ups to be scandalized at the amount they ate.

Jeff insisted on showing how well he could serve. He cut huge slabs of the cream for them both and then equally wide wedges of cake. For a few minutes there was little conversation save, "This is the best ice cream I ever did eat," and, "Say, this caterer is some bird, I'll tell the world," and, "Are you

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ready for some more yet?" It would have been sheer affectation for either one to have pretended to be interested in anything more than the feast, so they both gave their undivided attention to it.

"Gosh! I'm glad it was lunch time, so I could eat a lot!" Philippa breathed fervently. But her tone, slightly reminiscent, showed that the end of her capacity was almost reached. A bland, reminiscent pleasure, however, overspread her countenance.

"Can't you eat any more?" urged Jeff, anxiously. "Oh, come! Just a little more!" But Philippa shook her head decisively.

"Then we'll have to send what's left downstairs," Jeff said, with acute regret. "I don't believe I can eat any more, either—darn it! It's almost a religious duty to stuff on an occasion like this." Jeff laughed the jolly laugh that Philippa had never heard before. It seemed as if an altogether new boy was being introduced to her; she had never seen anything quite as enlivening as the way his white teeth flashed out. And the thick, thick hair of silky black, with a wave in it now that it had grown a little long during his illness so the obstinate curl could be seen, made her want to smooth and pat it just as she did her

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kitten's soft coat. The tiny white line of parting was just the dividing line between two plushy waves. With his sparkling eyes and the rich splash of color of his dressing gown, he was Festivity itself.

"Gosh! Anne and Virginia don't know what they're missing just because they were so mean to him!" Philippa thought. Had she been a story-book kind of a girl that thought would undoubtedly have been accompanied by a wave of sorrowful regret. But such was not the case. She felt, instead, a distinct exhilaration of spirits at the thought of the righteous retribution that had overtaken her two false friends, who had made her feel so lonesome and unhappy during the past weeks. And she prepared to enjoy herself still more.

When the maid had taken the remnants away—and even her eye had a distinct gleam in it as she saw how much was left—Jeff took the cover off the box of candy. It was from a house that Philippa knew only by reputation—a very prince of candy makers. At this stage of the feast she was able to enjoy in a leisurely fashion the artistic effect of the color scheme before she made her first choice. With the chocolate butter-cream in

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her hand she paused luxuriously after the first nibble.

"Did the X-ray man hurt you?" she asked.

"Not a bit. It was just tedious and, you know, uncertain while I waited. I'll give you my word I almost hugged the doctor when he came in to tell me. I've got the photograph here. Want to see it?"

Philippa nodded eagerly. But the minute afterward she said: "I don't see how they tell anything from *that*. It's just cloudy and streaked to me."

"The darkest parts are the bones, you know."

"The bones? Gosh! I'd like to have an X-ray taken of my bones."

"Why?"

"It's the only way I ever will see them."

Jeff surveyed her.

"They *are* pretty well covered, for a fact," Jeff said, candidly. Then they both laughed uproariously. Then, refreshed, they returned with zeal to the candy and the X-ray photographs.

"Those scientific sharks know so well how your bones and muscles and all ought to look that they can tell what's out of whack as

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soon as they look at the pictures. You'd never think that little undecided line there meant that a tendon was broken, would you? Well, it does, and it's no joke. Now they'll do me up in a cast and nobody can tell just how long it will be. But in a week I can get around. So I should worry."

"Oh, then we won't have the party until you can come!" Philippa said, joyfully. "And that'll be ever so much better. We can get the club started just right."

"Club?" Jeff's face became dismal. "Oh, say, Philippa, let's cut that out. I came because you wanted me to. But, honest, I'd rather— There are just about a million things I'd rather do than try that over again."

"Oh, not *that* old club." Philippa's tone was highly contemptuous. "I'll tell you." Only waiting to choose some luscious nougat, she told him about Bayard's idea.

"You said something when you said that," Jeff commented. "I'll come in. And I'll tell the world it's needed. Why, back home, father would as soon let his property be sold for taxes as not vote. And a bunch of them got the whole district so heated up about being real citizens—beginning the cam-

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paign at the schoolhouses and having us all take home printed stuff—that about seventy-five per cent registered at the polls. Voted, too, what's more. It seemed like an awful dead place when we came here, without elections or anything. Look here! Suppose you and I make out a slate now and a program. I've got a pencil and a writing pad ready. Who are the real, sure-enough live boys and girls here? Perhaps it's just because I haven't got acquainted yet that they seem like such dead ones."

CHAPTER XVI

A WEEK after Thanksgiving Bayard had gone back to college and Mr. and Mrs. Gale sat alone in the little upstairs den.

"It's quiet again downstairs." Mr. Gale put his book down and listened. "They must be launching the Great Project."

"Philippa must have taken my advice to spring it on them after they had been fed."

"So that's your strategy, is it? Whenever the dinner is especially good I'll have to be on my guard. And I had always considered you rather a guileless person."

They both laughed comfortably. They had reached the pleasant stage when most small flings at each other were stingless. Then they were startled by a burst of applause.

"Somebody's putting through what he wants," Mr. Gale said. "It's rather surprising to find how much I'm hoping it is Our Party."

"I'm beginning to like the boy for his own

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sake. He certainly seems to like being around the house with us here. It's amazing how a smile transforms that dark face of his."

They had been talking of other things for a time when the sound of tramping feet and of laughter in the hall downstairs warned them that the party was breaking up. Soon Philippa ran upstairs to them. One glance at her bright face showed them that all was well even before the torrent of words broke on them.

"Everything's just fine. Anne and Virginia are as pleased as anything. It just seems too funny to think of all the fuss that was made about Jeff before. I guess as soon as they really associated with Jeff they found out how nice he is. You see, he was the one who made the speech about the club; we fixed that all up. And everybody was as meek as anything, and Lawrence Tracy made the motion to have the club, and James Morgan proposed Jeff for president, even though Jeff did look too funny for anything, having to have his leg straight out in front of him when he sat down. But he knew exactly what to say and he didn't stammer and stumble around saying it. So I guess they begin to realize that Jeff amounts to some-

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thing, after all, and they don't have to have him in our club just because they are sorry about his leg. The sorry would wear out, anyway, because his leg is going to be all right soon." Philippa stopped to laugh and get her breath. "And the party was just great. I must write to Bayard about it; and thank you ever and ever so much, mother 'n' father. And now I think I'd better go to bed, because I really am tired."

She kissed them a rapturous good night. In what seemed no more than a minute from the time she left she called her mother for the usual going-to-bed ceremony. When Mrs. Gale bent over her to tuck her into bed and give her the last kiss that neither of them would ever have been satisfied to go without, the child said, coaxingly:

"Won't you just leave the door of the den open so I can hear your voices?"

"But why, dear? I'm afraid it would disturb you."

"No, I don't think it would. It's so cozy to hear the nice mum-mum of your voices and know that you are awake and—loving me. And I'm so happy to-night—and I guess I'm sort of excited—I'm afraid I'll get to thinking too much and lie awake. And

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then, when I lie awake, thoughts get all different and—scary.”

“All right, sweetheart. We'll leave the doors open, and in just about two minutes you'll be sound asleep.”

When she went back to her husband she said:

“Odd, isn't it, how Philippa, sturdy as she is, has these fits of wakefulness. Her imagination must run away with her sometimes. Although she never tells me anything about it, I know that she is afraid of some of the thoughts that come to her, alone in the dark. I'll have to get down underneath a little more. Sometimes children have morbid terrors at night that they are ashamed to tell anyone about, and that grow because they are not told. I remember that I did.”

“But surely Philippa would tell us; we certainly have her confidence.”

“I hope so. But children often have strange corners in their minds to which grown-ups—even loved ones—never penetrate. If I remember, I was desperately afraid older people would laugh at my own half-formed fears and fancies. Doreen, calm as she has always seemed, has told me lately of the most extraordinary thoughts that

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were going on in her mind. But then Doreen has always been my very own child, more like me; so perhaps it is easier for her to confide in me. Philippa has always had an alien strain; sometimes I have to guess at her motives. So when I realize that Doreen, normal and placid as she seemed at the time, lived in a world at times that we knew nothing of, I—”

“But Philippa—” Thus went on the discussion of the ever-fascinating subject of their children, calculated to last all night if prudence did not put an end to it. They finally paused long enough to realize that it was nearly one o'clock in the morning. Guiltily they switched off the light and crept to their room. Mrs. Gale, passing Philippa's room, peeped in. The child lay still on her peaceful moonlit bed, her eyes closed, evidently sound asleep.

CHAPTER XVII

BUT Philippa was not asleep. After her mother left the room she opened her eyes and stared straight ahead of her. It was a long time after that before she finally dropped to sleep.

When her mother came in to waken her the next morning she kept her eyes closed, although she knew that Mrs. Gale was standing by her bed. She felt that her mother paused by her bed indecisively. Then came her voice.

“Do you want to sleep a little longer, dear? You may. It’s Saturday.”

Then Philippa opened her eyes. But she didn’t look squarely at her mother.

“No, I think I’d better get up now.” As Mrs. Gale turned to go Philippa asked, suddenly, “Is there any dark man related to me who might give me a lot of money?”

“‘Dark man?’ You have been dreaming.”

“No. It was in a fortune—the way the cards came. And I wondered.”

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Mrs. Gale had a curious feeling that Philippa was looking at her as if she were seeing her mother for the first time—inspecting her. It made her uneasy. And it annoyed her to have the child's mind dwelling too much on money. So she answered, teasingly:

“If any one of the relatives has a fortune to leave, you may be sure there are children in plenty to leave it to. Perhaps you are thinking of Uncle Charles. But he isn't thirty yet. And I rather suspect he is thinking of getting married. As for any black-bearded pirate having buried treasure, I don't know of any nook or cranny about the premises where the key to buried treasure can have been hidden. As a matter of fact, we had the place all spaded up last spring, you remember, and resodded.”

More than an hour later Mrs. Gale found the child curled up in a corner of the davenport, staring straight ahead, although there was a book in her lap.

“Is there something bothering you, dear?” Mrs. Gale asked, lightly. “Or are you still dreaming about the dark man? Maybe it's M. d'Aillebout.” She patted the hand that lay listlessly on her little girl's lap.

“No.” Philippa's tone was sullen and

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she shrugged her shoulder a little farther away.

"If this is just a case of the dumps or bad temper, Philippa, you know, yourself, how foolish you are to indulge it. You are wasting—worse than wasting—what might be a happy day." Mrs. Gale spoke gently, but firmly, too. "There are all your Saturday chores not touched, too—room to put in order, stockings to darn. And then there is all this brisk, sunshiny day, with Anne and Virginia friends again. I should think that in itself was enough to make you happy. Don't you think you are being very foolish?"

Philippa raised her eyes to her mother's. Mrs. Gale had again the impression that she was being inspected as if she had been a stranger, neither antagonistically nor affectionately, but with curiosity—a curious wistfulness, too.

"I did think I was going to be perfectly happy when Anne had made up," Philippa said at last, in a low tone. "Perhaps I'm being foolish. But I don't seem to be able to help it."

"You don't know whether you can help it or not. You are not trying." Mrs. Gale

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was losing patience. "This is something no one else can do for you."

She jumped up. Philippa sat stupidly still. Her eyes followed her mother. She had a feeling of confusion, as if she had lost something. She wanted help, but didn't know how to ask for it.

"Just shake yourself out of your mood, dear, and get about something," her mother encouraged her.

"All right, I will." As she passed her mother at the door she put out her hand and touched her mother's arm clingingly.

A few minutes later she had forgotten the fear that had been making her happy, accustomed life seem unreal and mocking. A note had come from Madame d'Aillebout that concerned her.

Will you not to allow us [she wrote Mrs. Gale] an evening of the presence of your little daughter? To my son, the little Jean, and to my husband she has afforded, with her bobsleigh, an afternoon of pleasure. The little Jean he think her to be of a greatness supreme because she belong to the eighth grade of the Clifton Park school. He will be transported with pleasure to have her to dine with us the approaching Sunday at an early hour for the children.

I have not yet made the visits in to my friends of America because I mourn for my brother, who was so young to die in battle, and for so many of my rela-

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tives and friends. But I would wish well that you, my dear *madame*, would visit me. I am often of a loneliness, which *le bon Dieu* knows.

“Oh, mother, I can go, can't I? I have my blue dress and everything.” I liked the French gentleman so much. He is such a jolly man. And Jean is the funniest little thing—so solemn—like an owl.”

“I see no reason why you shouldn't,” Mrs. Gale said, thoughtfully. She was wondering. Should she tell Philippa that the “jolly” Frenchman was, in his own country, a count and of the old nobility. “No, I won't,” she thought. “It might prevent Philippa from being the simple, friendly little girl she would otherwise be, not being used to counts in this country.”

At a few minutes to six the next afternoon Philippa was taken by Mr. Gale to the door of the stately Trenholm place. To his surprise it was M. d'Aillebout who opened the door. D'Aillebout greeted Philippa's father jovially.

“You see that I am my own *garçon*,” he said. “In America we like all things but the domestics. To-day they have every one left us. There remains only the old *bonne* of *le petit Jean* who is come with us. *Bon!* We

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will have by that a so much better dinner. Will you not enter, monsieur? *Non?* Then I will conduct Mees Phileppa to madame."

"Madame," a tall, graceful presence arose when Philippa entered, putting down some delicate embroidery on a little work-table beside her. Her black gown had a certain beautiful austerity that threw into relief her white skin and deep-blue eyes.

"I am content to see the leetle"—she was speaking slowly and with great effort. "*Comment—*" She turned and poured a flood of French into her husband's ear.

"'Friend of Jean.' That is what you would say," laughed M. d'Aillebout. "But it would be bettaire that you allow me to speak for you," he said. "You have not yet enough words of English to converse understandably." And he laughed as if that were a great joke.

"*Mais*, I wish to sank Mees Phileppa zat she 'ave so moche of *plaisir* given to *mon petit Jean*," she persisted, smiling with much sweetness.

"But where is thees Jean?" asked M. d'Aillebout. "Eet ees the hour of dinner. Then he too talked in his own language, evidently questioning his wife. Philippa caught

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the name, "Schwartz," a German-American family of the Park.

She nodded her head.

"*Mais oui.* But yes, he was wit' that boy," she said. "And I do not know what they do." She was evidently nervous and distressed, but her courtesy would not allow her to make her young guest uncomfortable. "He will soon come," she said, cheerfully.

Then, with enormous effort she tried to tell Philippa how great had been the help rendered her country in its dire need by the great, good, and compassionate "*l'Amérique*"; how it was because of the brave "Sammies" that her country had not lost their all. "My 'usban', he not be wit' me zis day eef—" Her eyes filled with tears and she bent over her embroidery to hide them.

His face tender instead of jolly, the French officer evidently tried to calm his wife. And Philippa, child as she was, had a glimpse of the long years of strain and fear and suffering through which these people had lived. It brought the Great War nearer to her than anything else had done, for Bayard and all the boys she knew had been too young to enlist and the fathers too old.

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At that moment they heard a brisk altercation in the hall. M. d'Aillebout chuckled.

"Brigitte!" he said. "And vair moche excited."

"Jean!" said madame, heaving a sigh of relief.

But when the door opened and a stout, middle-aged woman, her cap and apron awry, appeared, holding a squirming small boy by the shoulder, the father and mother looked positively frightened. In truth, it was difficult to be sure, in that first glimpse, that Jean had not been trampled underfoot, or dragged by a runaway horse, through coal dust, or knocked down by a motor, so indescribably black and grimy did he appear, and so battered. His hands were as black as any negro's; his black hair hung over his face in wild disorder; his black eyes looked out from a black-streaked face. The heir of the D'Aillebouts looked uncommonly like a chimney sweep.

Brigitte gave him a little push toward the center of the room and then poured forth a flood of language, illustrated by heat-lightning gestures, which it required no knowledge of the tongue she spoke to know expressed the deepest dissatisfaction—more, disgust—with

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the adventurous Jean. When she finally had to stop for breath M. d'Aillebout said:

"But, my son, what is it that you have done to present such an appearance of yourself?"

Brigitte, having let off steam, displayed the liveliest interest in what Jean might answer. She poised her hands on her hips and waited. When he began to speak English she was plainly disgusted.

"Hermann Schwartz had a splendid chance to put in some coal and he said he would let me go in with him."

"Put in some coal?" the French gentleman asked, blankly.

"I should say we did put it in." Jean was so far recovered from his embarrassment as to let a boastful tone come into his voice. "Six tons of it. At seventy-five cents a ton. We divided fifty-fifty."

"At— What is it that you are saying? You cannot mean that you have taken *money* for putting one of your American neighbor's coal into his cellar!" The horror in M. d'Aillebout's face was mixed with some other emotion—the surprise—the admiration that is almost fear with which one

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contemplates an achievement of a wild adventuring into unknown fields.

"You bet! All American boys earn money." With what he fondly fancied was an American swagger Jean endeavored to ram his hands down into his pockets. But at that prospect of further damage to his clothes Brigitte darted forward and seized the hands, pouring forth again a flood of sound utterly unintelligible to Philippa.

Evidently she had madame's gentle consent to take Jean from the room, for she turned to go.

"And the dinner, Brigitte—*le dîner?*"

There was reassurance in her tone and soon she was at the door again, all smiles. As they rose to go to dinner, M. d'Aillebout said:

"Jean is becoming so American that it is to make one wonder." His tone and face expressed such mixed emotions, as did that of his wife, that Philippa did not know whether they were more delighted or mortified at Jean's enterprise. They evidently did not want to express their true opinion, for fear they might criticize the native customs.

But with perfect courtesy they put the

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disagreeable aside and tried to make their young guest at home. Philippa could appreciate how kindly was their tact. And, naturally, it required some tact to make conversation at a dinner where the guest did not speak the language of the hosts at all, and where one of the hosts spoke her language with effort and the other very little. But it was evident both M. and Mme. d'Aillebout were very anxious to practice English. Madame was very anxious to learn about the way Americans lived. It was evident that she had come to the country in a high state of emotion concerning everything in it. She had had some rude shocks, but she was still trying hard to prove that the country and its people were perfect in all respects. But every time she mentioned the servants it was with a childlike grief that she could have been so badly treated.

"If we had not had Brigitte," she began, and, her English failing her, made an eloquent gesture that said more than words could have done. "It is for that she is so faithful, that she is—what you call *gaté*?"

"'Gater' is, I think, in English to indulge, 'to spoil'?" Monsieur turned to Philippa, questioningly.

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"Oh yes, just what mother says we do to Mollie because she has been with us always and was my nurse," said Philippa, eagerly.

"Oh, then, eet ees some like that in *l'Amerique?*" There was an expression of dawning hope upon Madame's face. "Brigitte has been for *le petit Jean* the *bonne*—the 'nurse,' you say? I do wish vair' moche zat I know to spik bettaire your *langue*. I have such love for the countree zat 'ave save'—" Her lips trembled. Evidently she was very emotional. She began to talk rapidly, fervently, using an occasional word that Philippa understood, but, as a whole, utterly unintelligible. "Ees eet not as I 'ave said?" she appealed, finally, to her husband.

"My dear," he said, with humorous despair. "I have not understood one word that you have been saying during the last five minutes."

The dinner, served by the now smiling Brigitte, was simple but delightfully cooked, with many flavors that were entirely new to Philippa, and with delicious sauces that made it hard for a child with her sturdy appetite not to be actually greedy. Several delicate morsels were taken away from her when she

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stopped to answer one of madame's questions. And this loss she secretly mourned. Jean appeared only for dessert, immaculate and not at all subdued. Evidently he had been given his dinner elsewhere, for Philippa was convinced he could not have displayed such a polite indifference to food had his appetite not been already satisfied.

After dinner they went back to the drawing-room, where coffee was served and M. d'Aillebout smoked a cigarette or so. Philippa, immensely flattered by being offered coffee with the grown-ups, swallowed a mouthful or so clear, trying not to show how much she disliked the taste. Madame's white hands fascinated her as the needle flew endlessly in and out of her embroidery.

"They make being busy so pretty, somehow," was the thought in her mind. M. d'Aillebout, also, made a very gallant matter, somehow, of smoking a cigarette, his boyish smile flashing at them every other minute, from under the jaunty little black mustache.

"He seems to have so much time to be agreeable," Philippa commented to herself. "And it seems important to him to entertain us." Jean, after several respectful questions of Philippa about the habits and

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customs of the eighth grade, subsided into a very quiet small boy. His American brusqueness dropped from him. He brought a footstool close to his mother's side and, his head on her lap, gazed owlshly into the fire until his eyelids began to droop. Then, at a quiet word from Madame d'Aillebout, he kissed both his parents good night, bowed solemnly to Philippa, and left the room.

When Mr. Gale came for Philippa and was held a few minutes by the eager hospitality of the D'Aillebouts, Philippa had a sudden realization of how different her father was from the French officer. It was not only that M. d'Aillebout was dark where daddy was fair, or that the French officer's face was rounded where Mr. Gale's seemed to have, instead of curves, taut lines that told of concentrated purpose. "M. d'Aillebout looks so rested and daddy so tired," was Philippa's conclusion. And it gave her an uneasy sensation for a moment. "M. d'Aillebout must have had a very easy time," was the way she explained it.

On their way home they had walked some minutes in silence when Mr. Gale said:

"You wouldn't think that man had fought

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all through the war; had been badly wounded more than once; had seen his estate in the north of France devastated; had lost practically his whole family with the exception of his wife and son; and is noted for his desperate bravery. And he looks like a boy and apparently hasn't a care in the world. I wonder how he does it! You said he enjoyed coasting as much as you did, didn't you?"

"He seemed to have the best time of anyone on the hill," Philippa said, eagerly. "Oh, daddy, won't you come with us the next time there's coasting? Perhaps it would rest you, too."

"Perhaps it would," Mr. Gale said, thoughtfully. "But I'm afraid I'll have to wait until I put the Post Office cases through before I play again."

CHAPTER XVIII

IT was in keeping with that perversity of things to which one never becomes wholly accustomed that Philippa should have chosen the next Monday morning to inaugurate her annual fever about Christmas presents. Usually it showed itself earlier, the day after Thanksgiving being the normal starting point. But the excitement over Jeff and the new club had postponed it this year.

Moreover, there was a difference in the symptoms. Ordinarily its onset was accompanied by dancing eyes and radiant face. So this morning, when she fixed her eyes suspiciously on Mrs. Gale and demanded, rather than asked, that her allowance, being saved for her by her mother, be paid so she could begin to do her shopping, Mrs. Gale recognized the inexplicable mood of the Saturday before. She found that she was bracing herself to meet a struggle of some kind—she hardly knew what.

To tell the truth, this was a highly incon-

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venient demand to be made that day. Philippa's allowance, scrupulously saved, with occasional small windfalls in the way of gifts from various loving relatives, by this time amounted to a good deal. Philippa's extravagance at Christmas was really a scandal. But it was such a wild joy to her to spend royally on others what she had saved for the whole year, that nobody had the heart to take the pleasure away from her. In this case, she had something more than twenty-five dollars coming to her. And it was not easy for her mother to deduct that amount from her housekeeping allowance at that moment.

"Suppose you wait a few days, Philippa," she said, guardedly. She did not wish to disillusionize her daughter by allowing her to understand that the "saved" sum was not reposing in a special safe, intact and inviolable. "You don't really know yet what you want to buy, do you?"

Again Philippa's eyes narrowed, suspiciously and searchingly. And her face darkened.

"Hasn't Doreen had her allowance? And hasn't Bayard had his?" she asked, almost defiantly. She was showing a jealous spirit

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that was most unusual with her. Mrs. Gale exchanged a puzzled look with her husband.

"Why, certainly Doreen has had her allowance," Mr. Gale took up the dialogue. "But, if you remember, you asked your mother to keep yours for you."

"But I was to have it when I asked for it," she contested, stubbornly. "And I think I ought to be treated like the others."

"Philippa!" Mr. Gale said, sternly. But his wife shook her head warningly. She had an intuition that there was something hurting the child, some misunderstanding which they hadn't guessed. It wasn't a mere case of ugly temper. And Mr. Gale now saw that his daughter was looking at him with a piteously defensive sort of appeal in her eyes. And the tears seemed very near the surface. So he explained painstakingly:

"Sometimes it isn't convenient to produce money immediately. Your allowance has been put in the bank with all of the family money, and just now there is very little there. Mother finds it hard, sometimes, you know, to make her household allowance stretch over all the food and clothes and all the other things the family needs. You don't want to add to her worries, I'm sure."

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Then Philippa's face flushed with a generous regret.

"Oh, I didn't mean— Of *course* it's all right. I know mother always does everything she can for us. I'm so sorry—I'm always doing something bad." And the threatened tears spilled over.

"Oh, *that's* all right," Mr. Gale said, in as easy-going and comfortable a tone as he could manage. "Perhaps you'd just like to begin your shopping. I can help you out a little. Would five dollars be any good?"

But the child backed away from the outstretched hand as though it held blood money.

"Oh *no!*" she protested. "I wouldn't take it for *anything*, now. I know you and mother do just everything you can." She was hurrying out of the room, her face turned away. "You're just as good to me as if—" The door shut and the sentence was never finished.

Whatever it was that was troubling Philippa she had forgotten it by the time she got to school. Anne was waiting for her out in the playground, and a moment later Virginia came hurrying up, out of breath in her eagerness to overtake them.

"It's almost worth while having had Anne

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angry with me to have so much fun being friends again," Philippa thought as, arms around one another's waists, they walked around the block because it wasn't quite time for school. They all had to tell everything that had happened since Saturday afternoon. All the weeks when they had not been together they said nothing about! Each listened to the others mainly so the others would listen to her. Philippa's glowing account of her dinner at the D'Aillebouts was completely thrown into the shade by Anne's superior information as to the position of the French family. She enlightened Philippa concerning M. d'Aillebout's title and glories generally, and also contended that Madame d'Aillebout was related to the Belgian royal family. In some way the fact that she knew these things made her far more distinguished than Philippa, who had merely dined with nobility. Anne was like that.

"And somehow she always puts it over," Philippa fumed inwardly. She had a highly dramatic account to give of the dinner and it grieved her to have it wasted. There wasn't time to get it all in before school, so she wouldn't begin. However, it was good even to be irritated with Anne and Virginia.

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Philippa was very little at home the rest of the week, except to eat and sleep. In a frenzy of renewed friendship it was necessary that the girls should study together every evening. And that had been done alternately at Anne's and Virginia's. When, Friday morning before leaving, Philippa said: "May we have the living room and make fudge this evening, muzz?" Mrs. Gale consented with genuine pleasure. She sighed with satisfaction to feel that her young daughter's troubles were over and that the old order of things was re-established. Probably that was what had made her seem so odd occasionally.

The living-room fire, too, seemed to rejoice that the three friends were together again; it burned with admirable perseverance and didn't once sulk; every time a log was disciplined, it turned its cheerful "other cheek" to them and blazed up enthusiastically.

Anne's demeanor was brisk and self-confident, as usual. Apparently she was troubled by no sentimental recollections of the last cozy evening they had had together in the friendly room. But Virginia clung to Philippa a moment when she greeted her. Then

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she sat down at the piano. The significant smile that she directed at Philippa indicated that Virginia again was "saying it in music" and that the confidence was meant just for the two of them. The little melody had a hint of sadness in its opening minor strains. But it rippled into brightness and ended with a joyous, tripping, dance measure.

"That has more tune in it than your pieces usually have," Anne commented, approvingly. "Or is it some real music that you have learned?"

"Gosh! Anne," said Philippa, beginning to stir the melting chocolate and sugar in the chafing dish, "did you mean to flatter Virginia or insult her? *I understand.*" And the meaning glance she sent Virginia cemented the reconciliation. "Maybe sometime Virginia will get up courage enough to stand up for what she believes," thought Philippa. "And then she *will* be a dandy friend."

"Goodness! Philippa, I wouldn't say 'Gosh.'" Anne was complacently taking out the carving cloth she was embroidering for her mother for Christmas.

"I'd like to know what's the difference between 'Gosh' and 'Goodness'?" said Philippa, energetically stirring the bubbling syrup.

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"There is a difference."

"I don't see—" Philippa began. Then she thought to herself, "Oh, what's the use! I might as well give up expecting that Anne ever will admit she's wrong. I might just as well be pleasant and be done with it. Anne," she said, aloud, "we're going to have walnuts in it this time."

"Good!" said Anne, with enthusiasm. "It's so much better with walnuts." Somehow Anne's approval always made things so comfortable.

When the fudge was out on the window ledge, cooling, they settled down, side by side, on the davenport. Each, in her different way, recognized that the moment was sweet. Virginia snuggled her head down on Philippa's shoulder. And Anne, after a moment's hesitation, decisively grasped her hand. Anne's was a soft little hand, even if it was firm. An undefined wave of pleasantness went over Philippa. She couldn't possibly have described the sensation; but to have Anne hold your hand meant that everything was very sure and comfortable—all the simple, common things—and that you were snug and warm and satisfied and all wistful longings were shut out.

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"Gosh! but it made me feel as if Christmas was coming when we started on 'Holy Night' music lesson to-day. And I'm not a bit ready."

"You're *not*? Let's go down to-morrow and get some things. The stores are so crowded later on."

"I can't. I haven't—" Philippa checked herself and turned very red. Then she went on hurriedly, "I certainly am glad I'm not a music-teacher in the 8A Clifton Park school."

"Why?" asked Virginia, with interest. All of Philippa's opinions seemed of extraordinary interest to Virginia this evening.

"The boys are such nuts. Why can't they sing out? You'd think we didn't have anybody but girls in the school. Every one of the girls singing hard and the boys not making any sound—just a kind of buzzing. And every time Miss Steele looked at them they opened their mouths as if they were *bellowing!*" And then Philippa went off into one of her fits of laughter and they all had to follow suit.

"But their voices are so queer and unexpected when they do sing," said Virginia, plaintively.

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That sent Philippa off again.

"It's either a growl or a squeak," she gasped, breathlessly. "I'm weak with suspense when it comes Jeff's turn to sing alone. He ought to be able to sing 'The Star-spangled Banner,' anyway."

"Why? That's one of the hardest things to sing," said Virginia, earnestly.

"Why, some one said nobody could sing it but a boy whose voice was changing."

"That's an old joke," said Anne, calmly.

"I don't care. It's funny," said Philippa, quite as calmly. "Lawrence Tracy's got the only bass voice in the school, and when he really sings you feel as if you had fallen down the steps into the cellar. He acts as if he was surprised at it every time."

Virginia stopped laughing before the others.

"Perhaps we ought not to laugh at them."

"I felt just awfully sorry for that Stewart kid who has the high voice. When Miss Steele told him to sing the solo part in that jolly song from the Italian opera, he nearly fainted. He said, 'I *can't*, Miss Steele,' and she just smiled and said, 'Oh yes, you can,' and played the music for his part and waited. His hand went out to grab something just as if he was drowning. He got

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hold of his desk and gripped it until his knuckles were white. And then he got out, 'I'd like to spend my life in singing a joyous song—a joyous song,' looking as if he was going to cry every minute. A funny 'joyous song' it was. Honest, I almost *burst* trying to keep from laughing right out."

"You almost burst singing, I'd say," said Anne. "When we have a singing lesson Philippa stands up and swells her chest and goes through all the motions of a grand-opera star, just as if she was doing the whole thing herself, raising her eyebrows and making gestures and all. Honestly, Philippa, you don't know how funny you are to watch. When anyone else is singing you make the words with your mouth."

"I don't care. I do like to sing, whether I've got any voice or not. And if you get any fun out of watching me you're quite welcome," was Philippa's calm response.

"Mother says I can have a party during the Christmas holidays," said Virginia, hastily, feeling in her gentle soul a great horror of anything that might precipitate another clash.

"That's fine. I think the fudge must be cool by this time." Philippa made a dive for

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the window. "Yes, it's just right," she said a moment longer.

"Good!"

There was the most complete harmony in the room for a few minutes.

"M-m-m-m, this *is* good fudge," said Philippa, modestly. "Who 're you going to ask to the party?"

"Why, just the usual ones," said Virginia, vaguely. "The class, and the Henderson girls and my cousins and all."

Philippa ate a few minutes in appreciative and meditative silence.

"I like parties," she said at last, "all but the boys."

"Now that's silly. You can't have a party without boys."

The finality in Anne's tone roused Philippa, as it usually did, to original ideas by way of contradiction.

"I don't know why. We like to dress up and dance and all that, and they seem to hate it—judging by the way they act, anyway."

"Why do they come, then?" was Anne's brief question.

"Refreshments. The first happy minute for them is when the ice cream and cake come in. I never worked so hard in my life

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as I did at my last party before we had the meeting. There were all the girls on one side, all dressed up 'n' everything, talking together while the dance music was going on, acting as if the very last thing they wanted to do was to dance and really not thinking about another thing. And the boys were just all lumped together on the other side of the room, holding one another up as if they were afraid they'd be murdered if they separated. I declare they were just like a mass of the stickiest dates you ever saw. You just couldn't separate them. And I'd go up to one of them and say, 'Don't you want to dance?' And he'd mumble something that didn't mean anything, and then I'd pretend I thought he didn't know some girl that wasn't in his room at school, and take him over and introduce him and go away quick so he couldn't have any excuse to leave. And I'd think it was all right and he was going to invite her to dance. And the very next time I looked there he would be back with the other boys, holding his head stiff and straight because he had on a stiff collar and looking as if his best suit was like one of those suits of armor I saw down at the museum the other day. And that very same

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boy was so foolish as soon as we had refreshments, that I had to tap him so hard to make him stop rough-housing that I almost knocked him down."

"You didn't hit him?" Virginia was clearly scandalized.

"You bet I did. I've got as much muscle as he has. And I don't see why we ask the boys, anyway."

"You're a nice one to say that when you wanted to have—" Anne had said, when she stopped, biting her lip. "But do you think you'd like a party without boys?"

Philippa considered. Then she laughed.

"No, I wouldn't," she said, candidly. "But I'm sure I don't see why."

"I'll never marry anyone like anyone I ever saw," said Virginia, her eyes dreamy. "He's going to be tall and have gray eyes with lots of thick curling lashes, and be a naval officer and be sent to Hawaii."

"One of my cousins is at Annapolis," said Anne. "And—"

"Oh, but I mean an officer."

"Well, he has to go to Annapolis before he's made an officer, doesn't he?"

Virginia was silenced for a moment. Then she began again.

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"I have a cousin who has just got engaged. And she's only five years and three months older than I am. And the man she's engaged to is almost thirty years old *and has a bald spot on the top of his head*. How *can* she do it? Of course she can't be in love with him."

Anne's eyes suddenly widened with horror.

"Just think! Probably somebody will marry Dick Borden! And his ears are never really clean! I know because I've sat behind him all this semester."

Philippa began to shake with laughter.

"Well, what is the matter now?" asked Virginia, plaintively.

"Why, we don't see how any girl can ever like the boys of our own age, and we don't see how anybody can fall in love with a man who's as old as the one Virginia's cousin is engaged to."

"Well, what's funny about that?"

"And I heard a lady who was going through the school the other day say, 'The flower of the youth of the city is in the Clifton Park school.'"

"Well?"

"Well, there aren't so many years between thirteen and thirty—I begin to feel like the old farmers up at the Cove who say there

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isn't any use to make a garden there, because the season's so short."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Philippa," said Anne, severely.

"I just wondered when boys got to be worth being mushy about and when they stopped. But never mind. Have some fudge."

CHAPTER XIX

PHILIPPA was hurrying home from school. "What would mother think of me for having such a crazy thought?" she asked herself. "I don't believe she could even understand. And—she might laugh at me." Her face was red at the thought. She hated to be laughed at. "But it's got to be done, anyway. I've got to tell her. I've been acting like a perfect fool. But suppose I see the look come into her face that means it's *true!*"

"Oh, muzz!" she called out in her most loving voice as soon as she opened the door.

"Hush, Philippa." Doreen had appeared swiftly from the living room. She drew the child in and shut the door with no noise. "Mother and father are talking upstairs. He came home early. You mustn't disturb them now."

Philippa glared at Doreen.

"Gosh! I don't see why *you* should have so much to do with it," she said, rudely.

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"Did they tell you to keep me away from them?" There was a jealous suspicion in her angry eyes.

"No, dear." Doreen spoke with a gentle dignity that usually had its effect upon the younger sister, who adored her. But to-day the oil was poured on flames, not water. "But I think they have something they want to talk over. And I wouldn't say 'Gosh' if I were you. It—"

"I will if I want to. I don't see why you should know so much better than I what I ought to do. You're only six years older, anyway. I've got as much right in this house as you!" Philippa raged, starting upstairs.

Doreen put out a hand and held her.

"I think you'll be sorry if you interrupt them. Father is troubled. He looks badly. I'm sure they don't want us bothering them."

"I suppose they told *you*." Ugly and suspicious as Philippa's eyes were, she halted.

"No. Neither of them said a word to me. But I could see something was wrong. I know they want to be alone together. And I'm going to see that they have what they want." Doreen seldom asserted herself,

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but when she did there was usually reason for it. Philippa had to admit that. It's a nuisance, sometimes, to be intelligent. She was as ungracious as she could be about yielding, but she yielded.

"Oh, well, you needn't be afraid I'm going to inflict my company on them," she said, scornfully. "Will it hurt anybody if I go to my own room?"

"Of course not. Don't be silly." Doreen spoke a little impatiently. Her calm manner often covered intense feeling. She had been sitting alone in acute suspense, feeling sure that a crisis in the family affairs had been reached, that the Post Office bill was going wrong. For the last half hour she had been gripping her hands together, trying to decide how she could show her sympathy and her eagerness to help in the best possible way.

"Poor mother! Poor, poor daddy!" she said over and over to herself. But, beyond the fact that there was none of the lovely color in her cheeks that was usually there, nobody could have guessed the agony of sympathy that she felt.

For years afterward that evening stood out in Philippa's memory as the very worst their happy little house had ever known. It

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seemed as if dinner time would never come. And when it did come and they were all seated around the table, pretending to eat dinner, she wondered if it could really be the same room and they the same family.

"If they would only *tell* us and let us tell them that nothing really matters if we have one another," she told herself. But they didn't. So with fine scrupulousness she acted loyally up to what was required of her.

In fact, they were all acting, poor things! Mr. Gale, with a terrible bleak look on a colorless face, yet talked almost naturally, about the kinds of things that he usually talked about. Mrs. Gale, her anxious eyes turning to him every other minute, seconded his efforts to be conversational. She evaded looking much at either of the children because she found, to her shame, that if her eyes rested more than an instant on either dear face, the realization of the disappointment of innocent hopes in store for them brought the tears to her eyes. Doreen, as we have seen, was acting. Turning her flowerlike face toward her father or her mother, she smiled at what was intended to be humorous or widened her eyes at what she knew was intended to be noteworthy.

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Philippa was acting, following a bit defiantly the lead of her elders, saying and doing just the proper thing at the proper moment. She was impersonating, quite unsuspected by the others, the role of the one whose trust in life has been destroyed, but who still chooses the path of rectitude. To her, the fact that everyone seemed unhappy was a personal affront. She hated unhappiness.

When the interminable meal was ended, the two girls escaped gladly to their own rooms. Doreen, who had made an engagement for the theater that evening, soon left with one of the youths who were always hovering around her. Philippa, with a stern, set face, methodically studied her lessons, said good night dutifully—if hurriedly—to her father and mother, and finally, having read up to almost the moment of her orthodox bedtime, went to bed. She gave up the idea of telling her mother what was troubling her.

She had dreaded going to bed. She felt sure she was going to lie awake, and to-night the mere thought of lying awake terrified her. It was bad enough when she was too happy to go to sleep. But to-night, alone in a house that had turned a strange and unfriendly face to her, with Mollie in her

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room upstairs, with mother and father shut up over something terrible in the den; with Doreen out and forgetting all about her in the good time she was having; with Bayard miles and miles away, there was no protection from the unhappy thoughts that were in the corners of the room waiting to come out at her.

It seemed an age before she heard the clock strike. And then it was only ten! Closing her eyes in a feverish determination to go to sleep and cheat those things, forget the unknown new unhappiness and the big unhappiness that had been haunting her for days, she held herself rigidly quiet.

That was beginning to work. She was, after all, a tired little girl, and mere physical weariness was soon floating her own on a peaceful tide where all of the ugly fears and suspicions that had tormented her were first benumbed, then forgotten, when all at once something creaked—unnaturally. She was wide awake and trembling in an instant. She listened. There was no second sound. After some cowering moments in bed, her terror growing worse every instant, she made a superhuman effort, crept out of bed, and switched on the light. There was

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nothing there. She opened the door and peeped out into the hall. It was empty.

The light gave her courage enough to be angry at herself. She had always had a hearty contempt for children who were afraid of the dark. Still—it required determination to turn the light out again and lie still with the uncertain darkness all around her. She held herself very still. Surely she would go to sleep, as she had nearly done before, if she kept perfectly motionless and didn't let herself wonder what made that cloudlike shiny something near the window, or get to thinking about that.

“Oh, it can't be true! It just *can't!*” She told the rising bitter thought that would creep up, even as that cloudlike mist seemed to be advancing, even though she was determined it shouldn't. “Lie still! I must lie still! I *must not* open my eyes to look. That would mean that I really believe there *is* something. That rustling isn't anything but the window shade moving with the breeze. And—and I've just imagined about the—Lie still!”

But the more she ordered herself to be still, the more her legs and arms were strangely, wearily uneasy. They twitched

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with the constraint her will put upon them. "No, I won't light the light and read. I'm going to sleep. A minute ago I almost did."

The clock struck eleven.

"I'll hear Doreen coming home soon—if I'm awake then. I can call her." There was comfort in the thought. Such comfort that uneasiness and fear were ebbing away. She was almost startled when she did hear footsteps, real footsteps this time, on the stairs and knew that Doreen was really home. Her ears strained to hear her footsteps going down the hall. But no; instead, her door opened and Doreen peeped in.

"Hello!" Philippa said, casually. Doreen mustn't know how lucky it was she had looked in. It was too silly.

"Awake, little sister?" Doreen said, gently. Philippa adored her for the warm tenderness in her voice. She crossed over to the bed. Philippa stretched her arms and yawned realistically. But when Doreen kissed her her own lips quivered with exquisite relief and she put her arms up and drew Doreen's head down toward hers in a stifling hug.

"There! Go to sleep again. Why aren't you asleep? It's so stupid to lie awake, isn't

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it? I do it once or twice a year and then I'm so angry at myself."

"Was the play good?" Philippa asked, eagerly. That might serve to keep Doreen with her. She couldn't bear to let her go yet.

"Pretty good. Rather foolish in spots. But I mustn't keep you awake. Good night."

She was gone. But there was a warm, comfortable place in the child's heart where something hard and bitter had been.

"If it is so—but it isn't—Doreen doesn't know. Or, if she does, it hasn't made any difference." Hugging the thought to her she drifted off to sleep.

But it couldn't have been a sound sleep. All at once—she didn't know when—Philippa was wide awake. She listened to the sounds. They came from the room next hers, her mother's room.

"Oh, what is it? What is it?" The frightened child pulled the covers up tight around her and listened—paralyzed. It was— She had never heard anything like it before. It was— It was like some one crying. But yet not like— It wasn't mother. It came from her room. Dreadful sounds—tearing—gasping sounds. It was

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as if each one would burst—anyone's throat. It couldn't be— It couldn't be— He wouldn't—

The sounds were lower. There was a murmur of a voice— *That*, anyway, was mother's voice. And—oh, it sounded so sweet, so comforting. It meant that nothing could be hopeless. There was some help. Anyone—father *would* be comforted just to hear that voice and to know that mother was there—just loving—and comforting—

No! The sounds came again. There were words—gasping words in the midst— She covered her ears with the bedclothes. She couldn't hear. It wasn't right. Yet involuntarily she strained her ears.

“They don't know— What can children— Everything gone down I've staked. Oughtn't to have forgotten what it would mean—you all— But the *children*. Oh, yes, it's ruin! . . . No, there's no hope from Redf— No. You can't make *him* see anything. His constituents—election near—I'm *done for*, I tell you. Bayard might not be so much hurt, perhaps. But *Doreen*— might as well toss a flower on the ash-heap. Yes. Good God! I *know* I'm extravagant. Can't help myself— That's what scares—

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A cog has slipped somewhere— Lost my grip— If you can say anything— Help me to get myself in hand—”

Again the murmur. When it came the child relaxed her fierce tension. The voice was so sweet. It must comfort him—so steady—so believing. She listened, cowering. No, they didn't come again—the—the sounds. Just another murmur—a deeper one—broken up at first. It flowed on steadily—deeper now—louder. Now it sounded like real talking—like—like father—daddy—eager—

Philippa hugged herself, laughing and crying together. The tears, without her knowing it, ran down her face and soaked the sheets.

“It's over. She's made him feel all better. Oh, what can be the matter? It couldn't be just the bill. *That* couldn't make him feel like that. Oh, I didn't know fathers 'n' mothers ever felt like *that*. I thought it must be wonderful not to have to ask permission—do anything you want to. Oh, I'm so glad it's over. I'm so glad! I don't care about anything, now it's over. Something just made him sick. But he's all better now. Poor daddy! Oh, I must do something! I will do something!”

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Shaking, trembling, the tears streaming down her face, something was happening to the child. Something had penetrated to her heart that had never been there before. There was a pain in her throat that nothing but a broken winged bird or a dog lifting up a broken leg to the help of the godlike human above him had ever brought there before. She stretched out her arms toward the room from which the sounds had come in a dumb desire to add something to the healing that was going on.

It might have been that that was the destined night when Philippa's soul should be born. It might have been the moment at which the "higher sensory nerves" of which scientists' talk were evolved. It might have been merely that it was the stage at which the scales were stricken from her eyes, those stupid, untender scales through which we can never truly see.

The sounds from the next room were lower and lower. They stopped. Peace descended upon the house. Philippa, too, slept long and healingly.

CHAPTER XX

SHE woke in the gray of the early morning to a startling recollection of all that had happened the night before. And with that realization was the conviction that she must, right away without delay, do her part.

She heard her father in the midst of a great splashing in his bathroom. So, without pausing, she slipped her feet into bedroom slippers and wrapped herself in her woolly bathrobe and, after a gentle tap and a surprised "Come in" from her mother, she slipped into mother's room.

"Oh, muzz, may I come into your bed?" she asked, a wholly unexpected bit of a sob in her throat as the recollection of last night's sadness overwhelmed her, not yet quite out of the misty half world of dreams. In answer her mother put out her arms and drew her in under the warm covers.

As those arms, that had never yet failed her, closed warmly about her the child broke into a storm of tears.

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"Oh, mother, I didn't know mothers 'n' fathers felt like *that*. I heard last night—I couldn't help it—I just felt *awful*—"

"You heard? Oh, I— Wait, dear! Don't cry like that. You mustn't. Don't worry about father. He had had a blow, but you can't down him. He's got his second wind—his thousandth. He was ill last night, broken down physically. Nerves will give way sometimes even if your purpose doesn't. He's thought of a dozen new ways of 'getting at them' this morning. He's just waiting until nine o'clock to get to work."

"But it was awful last night. And I couldn't do anything. And—and I wanted to— And I had been so mean. But—but—oh, muzz, you *are* my own mother 'n' father, aren't you?"

"Philippa! Dear child, you mustn't cry like that! You'll make yourself ill. What do you mean? I knew there was something on your mind. What do you mean by 'own mother and father'? What else should we be? What crazy idea— Now, really, Sweet-heart, you must *stop*. You'll be really ill. It's bad for you to give way. There—there, dear. You are safe in mother's arms and nothing else matters to either of us."

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Philippa's sobs were subsiding. She was no longer shaking so violently. Only long, sobbing breaths, the ebbing of the sea of tears. She hid her face on her mother's breast and then the words came, hesitating at first and then tumbling over one another.

"I heard you and father talking, that night after the party, when I was so happy, you know, and asked you to leave the door open so I could hear your voices. I didn't mean to hear anything you said. But I did. I heard you say, 'Of course, Doreen is my own child,' and—and then, 'but Philippa—' And then the door swung shut and I didn't hear any more. And—and I heard you come into my room, but I pretended to be asleep and—" She stopped and the sobs rose again in her throat.

"But what—? I don't understand— You couldn't have thought—?"

"I didn't really believe. And yet— But what *did* you mean, mother? And there *have* been things like that. I've read about them, and seen movies where children have been brought up in families as if they had been own children when they weren't and didn't know until they were grown and had fortunes coming to them. And I got to

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thinking about that. And of *course*, I didn't really believe it, only I couldn't drive the thought away. And it seemed to me that you treated me differently from Doreen. And there was the dark man in the fortune who was going to give me a lot of money. I remembered him and it was so awful to think that maybe it was going to turn out that he was my father instead of daddy. I didn't *really* believe any of that, but it all went together, and as soon as I got rid of one thing another thing would come back—at night you know. And I felt all hard and ugly inside me. And—I just couldn't *stand* it. And—please wait just a minute before you tell me anything. I want to say this *first*. Last night I knew that I could just do *anything* for you and father. And it didn't matter whether I was really your own born little girl, because you had really been my mother 'n' father, anyway—the best anybody *ever* had. So it just doesn't make any difference. Perhaps I love you more, even. I just want to make you and father feel happier. I *will* be more careful about my clothes and not wear them out so fast, and darn my stockings when the tiniest hole begins to come, and you don't need to give me my

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allowance. If I can only make you feel better."

She burrowed her head desperately into her mother's shoulder. For a second the mother couldn't speak. It was too incredible that this storm could have been brewing. How could a little child, yesterday a baby, suffer like that? Just from a thought?

"Sweetheart! Of course, you're my own, my very own, baby. I can't imagine what words I could have used."

"You said, 'Of course Doreen is my very own child. But Philippa—'"

"What I must have meant that she was more like me, more as I remembered having been as a young girl. And about you—perhaps we were talking of your being more uneven, imaginative, impetuous than the other two. Every child is sometimes a surprise to a mother. Something from the big strange Outside comes in and you look at your child, just yesterday a baby in your arms. And there is a new personality demanding attention, thought, consideration, *admiration*, like the interesting man or woman you have just met and been attracted to—are trying to understand—get under the skin of. Your father and I are always being

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surprised. Bayard sometimes seems so *new*, so wonderful to us, that we wonder how he happened. And Doreen— Why, girlie, you could have overheard me saying just that same thing about each of the others a hundred times. That's what makes the wonder of being mother. God puts a helpless soft little bundle of flesh and blood into your arms. And to-morrow it is looking at you with eyes that give instead of ask. It's the miracle, the sweetest thing in earth—or heaven—I believe it must be." She finished under her breath and strained Philippa to her in a long, wonderful embrace.

Philippa lay motionless, awed, and silent. Then she said, faintly:

"I don't see how you can *stand* me, when—when I make so much trouble now when you and father are so worried."

"Now you're being morbid. It's foolish to waste strength being remorseful over things you couldn't help. There's no crime in having an imagination. It's the most precious thing in the world, the thing that has made every advance the world has known possible, from the first hearth fire to the airplane. But it's got to be harnessed and made to work, not allowed to kick over the

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traces like a runaway horse. It's folly to let wild thoughts, painful thoughts, have their way with you without making an effort to find out the truth immediately. There is truth in what some scientists say that thoughts so hidden are like a bruise that cannot be reached; they make disease where, if they could be open to the healing of the truth, there would be none. I shall blame you if you nurse an ugly thought like this in secret another time. If you had only come to me the first instant you had such a monstrous idea! You would have known how absurd it was and been saved so much. And there's the harm of the crazy stories people write for children like you to read—as if a normal human wasn't the most wonderful romance of all!”

“I was ashamed. I sort of knew it couldn't be true, and yet—”

“And yet it came back and back. I know. But I'm sure that, after this, no thought can come into your mind to trouble you that you can't tell us. That's what your father and I are here for. There's no shame in having a foolish thought—once. Everyone has, sometimes. But there is shame and folly in harboring them.”

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"I'll never, *never* have another that I don't tell you." Philippa hugged her mother convulsively. "But I couldn't imagine, you see, that you could possibly be as good as you have been to me and say just the right thing. It's because you are so high up above me."

"Never that, dear." Mrs. Gale spoke almost with severity. "Just a little farther along the road. And more in need of what you children give than you can possibly be in need of us. Now, particularly, if father should really lose out with the Post Office cases, we will need all the help you children can give us—just the *precious* help you bring. But now, don't say anything to father. It would be a shocking thing if he knew you heard last night. Run away now, I mean. But keep close, close, *close*. That's all that matters. And it makes everything worth while."

From the door came back a little choked voice:

"I'll remember. And—mother—if you weren't my *born* mother 'n' father I'd *choose* you."

CHAPTER XXI

ALTHOUGH at breakfast that morning Philippa could not quite meet her mother's eyes, being a bit embarrassed at the recollection of the highly emotional time they had had together, she had a knowledge that there was a new sympathy between them. She felt awkward and constrained, but very happy. And she had a special kind of love for everybody. Yet there seemed no way she could show it.

She was abnormally sensitive for everybody; the simplest thing that was said she winced at; it might hurt her father or mother. It was as if her nerves had put out tentacles and every passing breath hurt them. When her father, a little pale, but rather more than usually cheerful, said:

"We'll have to bring home part of your Christmas money, Pip; perhaps you can get some shopping done to-day if you will come down to the office first," she drew back, almost horrified. How could he think she

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would let him give her money, knowing what she did. Then she reminded herself that he didn't know she knew. This brought the realization that probably many times when she hadn't known, father had still been just as cheerful. How unselfish fathers and mothers had to be and what a load they bore cheerfully. At that moment it seemed to her that they must go around with bleeding hearts nine-tenths of the time, bearing immeasurable griefs with a smiling face. It would not have been Philippa if she had not done full emotional justice to a situation! But she did manage, instead of allowing him to guess her own private melodrama, to say very naturally:

"I think, after all, father, I'm not quite ready yet. I want to think about it a little longer." And just as she was congratulating herself that nobody understood what was going on in her mind, she met her mother's eyes. And her mother smiled a sweet, understanding smile at her. So Philippa began the day, feeling that it was marked off from all other days. She went off to school very quietly, reflecting pensively that she had been a mere careless child when she had trodden that way before!

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Although Mrs. Gale had none of the satisfaction with which Philippa was dramatizing the situation, some of the glow that followed on the prophecy of a woman ally and friend in the freakish little Philippa remained with her. Even Doreen's parting caress or the fact that the mail brought one of Bayard's letters did not, at that time, mean so much. It helped her to speed her husband with a steady confidence of victory—somewhere and sometime. It lasted over the routine morning duties. As she left Philippa's room, the last in the morning straightening up, she gave the bureau cover an extra affectionate little pat as she smoothed out a wrinkle.

CHAPTER XXII

“YOU certainly must be feeling well, Philippa,” Doreen remarked at lunch Saturday. “Honestly, mother, the child looks to me as if she had gained ten pounds in the last week. Did you *ever* see such cheeks? It’s nice being at peace with all the world again, isn’t it, Pip?”

“Um—humph!” said Philippa, very ungraciously. She knew she was supposed to be gratified at Doreen’s remark. But she wasn’t. It aroused a certain horrible doubt in her mind. Perhaps it was the first time that Philippa had ever thought much about her appearance except to prefer her new dresses.

“Am I getting too fat?” She ran up to her room to look in the mirror before she went for Anne and Virginia, with whom she was going downtown for a picture, and a chocolate marshmallow sundæ after it. She might, of course, have inspected herself in the tall mirror in the hall, but her own look-

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ing-glass, somehow, seemed more reliable. The image of herself at various stages seemed to linger there for purposes of comparison. "I hate fat people. Yes, I believe I am fatter than I was. And my clothes feel tighter than they did. They certainly do."

She compressed her lips. The day suddenly became overcast. Her winter hat, which she had always put on with serene confidence because mother had got it for her and it was new this winter, all at once she looked at doubtfully. *Did* it make her face look round and fat? Her coat seemed to pull across the shoulders.

"I must really have gained," she thought. "Oh dear! why can't I be nice and slender like Doreen!"

Acutely dissatisfied with herself, she went to the rendezvous. A lady who passed her turned to look back. Philippa was certain the lady was remarking on her *avoirdufois*. She flushed and felt miserably self-conscious. But there seemed to be nothing that she could do about it. If she was fat she just was.

When Philippa met Anne and Virginia both of them noticed that something was the matter with her, but neither of them wanted to ask her what it was. Philippa was apt

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to be snappish when she was asked inconvenient questions. Even Anne, eternally sure of her own righteousness as she seemed to be, had no desire to awaken controversy. She was, underneath, nervously anxious to be friends.

So they didn't appear to notice that Philippa wasn't in the happiest humor, but made conversation with each other to cover up their friend's silences. And there were many silences. Try as she would, Philippa couldn't forget her fatness. It clung to her, made her awkward about getting on and off the car, afraid of showing pleasure over anything because it might make her conspicuous. When people glanced at her in the car she thought they were commenting on her size. The color left her face and she did, in truth, look of a somewhat pasty chubbiness.

If people were fat, was there any way they could help it. Once when Doreen had been ill she got very thin and they made her drink lots of milk so she would gain flesh. If there was a way to gain it there must be a way to get rid of it. That gave her a ray of hope and she brightened up.

"I'll find out," she told herself with de-

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cision. Then she was doubly uncomfortable. It was all right to know you could get thin, but that only made her feel more enormous in the present. And how did you do it, anyway?

Fortune favored her. On the seat in front of her were two middle-aged ladies talking with great enthusiasm. All at once she caught some words, "overweight," "reducing," and then a whole sentence: "My dear, the fat just melted away the very first week. I lost ten pounds."

Philippa looked at the billowing dame with a fellow-feeling that she probably would not have felt the day before.

"Gosh! how could she ever have weighed ten pounds more than she does now?" she asked herself with an awakening of scientific curiosity.

"How did you ever do it?" asked her friend, with respectful interest.

Philippa strained her ears to hear the answer.

"Oh, it's very simple, but I do give myself the credit for having kept it up. Now Mary Kilgore didn't hold out after the first week."

Philippa felt a passing disapproval of the weak-willed Mary Kilgore.

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"I just cut out all sweets, all starchy food, but two thin slices of toast in the morning; also all fats."

"How about potatoes?" asked her friend.

"Oh, no potatoes, *of course*." There was something like horror in her tone.

"But that didn't leave you much to eat, it seems to me."

"Yes, it did, all that I really required. I could have green vegetables, several salads (without dressing, of course), all meats but pork in any form. But I really think it is the exercise that is more important, perhaps. I had setting up exercises in my room morning and night and walked not less than five miles a day. And then I rolled."

"But I thought they didn't roll any more."

"Some people are foolish enough to say that that is an exploded idea—rolling, I mean." The zeal of the convert was in her voice. "But I have found rolling most helpful. Only you must roll *enough*. Fifty times is my regular program, fifty times morning and night. And you see the result. I haven't any hips or stomach to speak of."

She smoothed down complacently the steep descent by which she was, as it were, fenced in all around. There was a good deal

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of territory within the palisades, it is true. But Philippa, on the trail of a useful idea, accepted without criticism her assertion that she "had no hips to speak of." She covertly stroked the analagous portions of her own anatomy. There was no such steep descent there.

"Fat!" Philippa thought to herself with infinite contempt for herself. "Just fat."

All through the picture, although it was a really good one that the censorship of the elders had agreed the children would be benefited by seeing, Philippa was strangely silent. But Anne, whose party it was, was convinced that her friend was lost in enjoyment of the scenes that passed before them, and quite plumed herself, Anne fashion, on having been clever enough to choose such a superior film. But when, after the show was over, they stopped at the soda fountain that was absolutely the height of their desires, to have a treat, and then Philippa, with a thoughtful face, refused refreshment, both Anne and Virginia were seriously alarmed.

They stared at her with mouths unbecomingly open.

"What is the matter, Philippa?" Anne demanded, indignantly. "Are you angry again?"

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"I wasn't—" Philippa began, and then checked herself. Hadn't she made up her mind that it wasn't worth while to expect Anne to see some things? "No, I'm not angry. I just don't think so much sweet stuff is good for me."

They opened both their eyes and their mouths this time.

"Why, have you been sick?" It was Virginia, the sympathetic, who spoke first this time.

"No. But I—don't want it." Philippa was beginning to feel out of patience with all this curiosity. "I'll take a lemonade," she said, at last, to stop further inquiry.

So the lemonade was ordered and they found a cozy table where they could sit down together and enjoy what had always been a truly happy moment. Having sweets downtown in this grown-up fashion, with all the afternoon crowd of pleasure seekers drifting in and out, was enough of a novelty to them to add to the sincere enjoyment of luscious tastes. But to-day something prevented the fullest pleasure. Anne and Virginia kept looking at Philippa inquiringly. They couldn't quite understand how anyone in her sober senses would actually prefer

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lemonade when she could have ice cream with a rich chocolate sauce over it, with nuts and marshmallow and whipped cream on top of that. And Philippa, though it was by her own act that she was martyred, could not help feeling a little injured when her friends partook of the sweet and creamy deliciousness which her own resolution would not allow her to enjoy.

That day began a new era for Philippa, an era which her family, not being in her confidence, did not wholly enjoy. It took them a long time to realize that she was not sickening for some serious illness. When had Philippa ever been known to refuse her favorite summer dessert compounded of macaroons, lady-fingers, Maraschino cherries, and whipped cream before? Then there was her sudden interest in setting-up exercises, her long walks every day—alone, since none of her friends could be prevailed upon to accompany her. She withdrew to her room early; she arose early without being called; curious sounds, bumps, and thumps were heard whenever she was known to be alone there, behind closed doors. All this, they felt, could probably have been very easily explained. But Philippa refused to explain

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it. She kept her own council as she went about with a purposeful, withdrawn look upon her face.

"They're probably having a 'health crusade' in the schools," Doreen suggested. "They used to have them when I was there." But discreet questions failed to confirm that idea. There was no health crusade on in the schools, and Philippa had no chart upon which to mark down whether she had taken a bath that day or whether she had brushed her teeth after each meal.

"If ever there was a child that didn't need a health crusade it is Philippa," sighed Mrs. Gale. "If she gets much healthier I don't know what I'll do with her. She's so bursting with vitality now that she makes me feel limp when she comes into the room."

Philippa, as a matter of fact, was getting a good deal of enjoyment out of her determination to reduce her flesh. She was obsessed with the idea; she was collecting much information about the exact relation between what you eat and what you are. Moreover, she was discovering that there is a certain pleasure in proving that you can boss your own body; it gave her a sense of proud independence to sit in the midst of a roomful of

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family and refuse to eat the things which they allowed themselves to enjoy. It created a highly agreeable sensation of proud superiority and a corresponding pitying condescension toward weaker beings. This was so new to Philippa, rather used to being the faulty member of the family, that it compensated for the loss of much that she had formerly held dear.

But more than any other pleasure was the pleasure of feeling that no one could ever call her fat. As each day passed she was one day nearer the joyous moment when she would weigh herself and find just how much she had lost in the first week of her campaign. As she pounded home after a long, brisk walk, pulses bounding, blood tingling in her cheeks, and realized that she had probably lost several pounds of the obnoxious flesh, she came home well fortified to resist the sweet that had always been the crowning part of dinner, that for which one dutifully ate the homely necessary meat and vegetables without which one was not allowed dessert.

And she did resist, like a true Spartan, even though the sharp appetite which so much exercise gave her made it necessary

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to avert her eyes from something that she especially liked—chocolate blanc-mange, for example, with cream. She was surprised to find how much flavor there was in things that she had always regarded as very dull indeed; steak and lettuce and even spinach she ate as she had never eaten before.

But sometimes the effort to withstand temptation was a strain upon her temper. It seemed as if something inside gnawed when she saw cake with thick frosting. Once, after she had been denying herself for five days and Mollie brought in her favorite cake—chocolate with white icing—she had hard work to keep the tears back. It seemed wickedly heartless that the others so evidently enjoyed it. And Doreen took that time to tease her about her whim.

“What’s the use, Pip? We all know you can do it. But why so much effort to attain health. Nobody doubts your being well. You are just bursting with health.”

Then Philippa’s temper flared up suddenly.

“Maybe you think it’s a nice thing to make fun of me, but I don’t,” she said, with passionate indignation and left the room.

“Really, this is carrying the matter to an

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absurd degree," said Mrs. Gale, really concerned. "I'm afraid the child is making herself really ill, going without things. And what do you suppose it's all for?"

Philippa was beginning to count the hours now until she could weigh herself and know just what her reward was going to be for all her self-denial. She had made up her mind to walk into town Saturday morning; that would be just a week since she had begun the system which the lady in the car said had reduced her ten pounds.

On Friday Anne and Virginia were full of plans for that evening and the coming holiday. Philippa had to ward off the usual Friday evening together because that would mean fudge, and it was more than mortal strength could bear, to make fudge and not eat it herself. And it would certainly lead to embarrassing questions. She couldn't bring herself to tell the girls about reducing. The queer self-consciousness which she had felt ever since Doreen's words had first made her feel fat made her sensitive about having anyone know.

"I'll wait until I find how much I have lost and then I'll just tell them that I found I was overweight and took the matter in

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hand," she thought. That quite filled her with a glow of pleasure for the future, but it didn't prevent Anne and Virginia, after rather perfunctory suggestions that they meet at the house of either of the others, from separating without providing for any meeting and with the feeling that Philippa was putting them off.

Friday evening she spent in her own room, going through all the exercises she could remember from health exercises at the school, and especially devoting herself to what she imagined was the "rolling" the lady had spoken of. Saturday morning, she left the house early before the girls could call her up to get her to do something with them.

It was a cold, brisk morning. Philippa felt a great devotion to the goddess Hygiene as she swung along in great style—elbows close to her sides, chest up, weight on the balls of the feet, mouth closed, drawing deep breaths, exulting in motion. A funny line of poetry which Doreen had been laughing about the day before came into her mind, "The pride of legs in motion kept us on."

"That may not be very pretty, but it certainly does describe how you feel," she thought. "I wish it was two miles to the

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drug store that has the scales. Perhaps I've lost more than ten pounds. I'm sure I ought to."

When she got to Bennet's, instead of marching gayly up to the scales without caring who saw her, she looked rather guiltily around before she unobtrusively stepped up and slid her penny in.

The needle oscillated—wavered—gradually settled on the figure it was going to point to. Her eyes opened wide in horror.

Philippa walked straight up to the soda fountain and had a sundæ and an ice cream soda. As soon as she got home she begged the cake that she hadn't eaten the evening before from Mollie. She lounged around the house all day, reading the new book of her pet series that she hadn't had time to read before. She called up Anne and Virginia and asked them to come over in the evening and make fudge.

At dinner that evening, as she asked for a second piece of cottage pudding, Doreen said, laughingly:

"Look out, Pip. You'll get fat if you don't take care. I'll have to be looking up a diet for you," Philippa laid down her fork and looked belligerently at her sister.

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“You needn't tell me anything like that! And that woman in the car must have dreamt she lost ten pounds. She certainly didn't look as if she had ever lost anything. I haven't eaten one single sweet or starchy thing for a week. And I've exercised and exercised and rolled and haven't done anything I wanted to do and have been seeing visions of mountains of chocolate and maple nut sundæs. And all it did was to make me so hungry I ate about twice as much of other things. And when I was weighed to-day I had gained two pounds and a half instead of losing. If I've got to be fat, I'm going to have some fun while I'm about it.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THAT evening the thermometer suddenly began to fall. When Anne and Virginia arrived at Philippa's house they reported that it was bitter cold. As they sat on the davenport in the warm living room before the blazing logs they could feel the constantly increasing chill in the world about them. Mr. Gale, who had been having a business conference downtown, came in about ten o'clock, looking as eager as a boy, his eyes bright and an unaccustomed color in his face.

"It's freezing. I believe there'll be skating in the morning," he said, as he came in to warm his hands before the fire. "I declare, I believe I'll get out my skates and have a try at it. We haven't had any skating here for four or five years."

"And I can try the skates I got last Christmas," said Philippa.

Somehow, after that, Virginia's birthday party, due the next Tuesday, lost interest

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for them all. Virginia's delicate face looked a little downcast as she said:

"After what you said the other night about parties, Philippa, it makes me feel as if you didn't care whether you came to mine or not. It just spoils it all, somehow. And I had been looking forward to it for so long."

"Oh, Virginia, I'm so sorry! I wouldn't have you feel like that for anything. I just love parties. And I've worn my new blue dress twice only, once at Thanksgiving dinner at the Randolphs' and once at the D'Aillebouts'. I couldn't help laughing about the boys. Sometimes when you get to thinking about things like that it just runs away with you. I hardly know what I'm saying. It's like that time when we were all out on a farm in the summer and I thought a horse was running away with me. I had always been crazy to ride and thought I could do it the very first time. So they put me on an old farm horse and he started off. I felt as if I was lost—as if all the forces of nature that we study about in physics were running away with me. Everything seemed so unreliable. And they told me afterward that the horse had just cantered gently. I guess my tongue's like that, and what I say,

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when things seem funny, hasn't any more to do with what really is than I had to do with the way that horse went. But, you know, the boys *are* funny."

"The thing that puts me so out of patience is that it is the ones you know are really the nicest that are the silliest, the ones that are the best at football and baseball, you know, and bright in class and all that," said Anne. "And the ones that have good manners at parties and are polite and ask you to dance and like it are the ones that all the other boys haven't any use for. Why do you suppose it is?"

"Search me," Philippa had begun, slangily, when a thought struck her. "Perhaps it's because it isn't what they are really interested in and so they have time to think about themselves and foolish about their best clothes and all that. Say!"

She stopped and her eyes grew big and bright.

"Well, what is it?" asked Anne a little irritably. It always did annoy her, somehow, when Philippa got excited about something they couldn't all see.

"Wouldn't it be fun to have a different kind of a party, something that the boys

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would enjoy as much as we did; not a dress-up thing?"

"But what on earth is there in winter? We can't go for a picnic."

"That's just it—something outdoors. Oh, Virginia, do you suppose your mother and father would be willing. I'd help—"

"What? How? What do you mean?" Virginia's face was eager in sympathy, but she was puzzled.

"Just suppose there was skating and it lasted and we could have a skating party out at the Cartwright lake?"

"But how would that be a party? Just to go and skate? And it's too far away and we haven't all motors." Anne looked a little disdainful.

"Oh, I see." Virginia was more excited than Philippa now. "We could ask Mr. Cartwright if we could use the lake that evening, and it's too far for people to come out unless in some special way. Father knows him and Bert Cartwright used to go to our school a long time ago, so Mr. Cartwright 'd be interested because of Bert. We could take six or seven out in our car and perhaps Anne's father would drive me out."

"That would be easy enough," said Phi-

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lippa, decidedly. "Most of the kids' families have cars and they'd be glad to take the ones out who haven't. And we could go out before and take all sorts of rugs and cushions and gather wood for a big bonfire. I'm sure daddy will help us. It's such a shame Bayard isn't here; he could do the whole thing. Instead of ice cream for refreshments, you could have hot things and either take them out in thermos bottles or, what would be more fun, have a big kettle of hot chocolate over the fire, and coffee, perhaps, since it would be out-of-doors, and sandwiches. And as soon as you got chilled from skating you could get warm by the bonfire. And there would be plenty to eat. You know how starved you always get after you have been skating."

"I think that *is* a good idea." Anne had taken fire at last. "And it would be a great thing, Virginia, for the three of us to put something over that was entirely different. And of course we'd all help work it out. The only thing I don't like about skating is that you get so awfully cold before you can get to any place where you can get warmed up again. It will be fine, if only there *is* skating and it will hold."

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"I'm just sure that there will be," said Philippa, decidedly. "It just can't be that such a perfectly good idea as this will be spoiled. And we'll only have to wait two days. And that will just about give us time to make all the arrangements. Let's look at the weather bulletin in the paper."

They ran for the paper and, in finding it, poured the great idea into the sympathetic ears of Mr. and Mrs. Gale. The weather report waxed favorable to their hopes. A wave of intense cold was moving east from the Rocky Mountains. By Monday morning it was expected that the temperature would be down to zero. And the cold was expected to hold for several days.

"Oh, Gosh! that's good!" said Philippa. "And we'll ask Miss Graham not to give us any assignments that evening. Oh, I say! We'll *ask* Miss Graham to the party. I know she'd love it. She's such a good sport. She has awfully hard work to keep from laughing, sometimes, when some of the boys are worse nuts than usual."

True to its promise, the cold snap did arrive on schedule time. By the next day it was reported that there was good skating on the tidal basin. Mr. Gale took it upon

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himself to go out with Mr. Cartwright after office hours to test the ice on the little lake that was the glory of the Cartwright place, about five miles from Clifton Park. The report was favorable. The three families, genuinely interested, busied themselves making the necessary arrangements. Everybody went to bed Monday evening in a high state of tension regarding the weather. It was a jubilant family when it was evident that Tuesday was even colder than Monday had been. There was not the slightest prospect of a thaw.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN Philippa saw the Cartwright lake that evening, a lump came in her throat and her eyes smarted with tears of sheer delight. It seemed to be the radiant dreams of fairy beauty of her early childhood realized. The lake, at the bottom of a gentle depression from which the slopes rose soft and dark with evergreen trees or sharply etched with the bare interlaced limbs of oaks and tulip poplars, was surrounded with a chain of many-colored lanterns. In a little clearing, flames of the newly lighted bonfire were already eagerly leaping skyward. Above all was the full moon, so radiant that its rays seemed to carry warmth with them. Played upon by so many lights, white or red, yellow, lavender, or silver, flickering, leaping, swaying or calmly constant, the smooth surface of the ice was all one radiance, broken by little pools of color where lantern, fire, and moon combined to produce

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a burnished tint that no color spectrum has ever known.

"It's like an opal for the giant Earth's finger," thought Philippa, dreamily. Then she resolutely shook the dream out of her head and went to work. Rugs and cushions had to be arranged at a safe distance from the bonfire. A big kettle of bouillon and one of chocolate had to be made ready for the grate over a smaller fire. There was enough for the three girls and their families to do to get ready for the crowd. For they expected more than sixty boys and girls to come. All of the twenty-five members of 8A were coming, M. d'Aillebout was to bring little Jean, and cousins and special friends of the girls made up the number. Furthermore, Mr. Cartwright had asked to include some distant relatives of his own.

It seemed only a minute when the first automobileful of guests drove up. As they were piling out with enraptured shrieks and giggles from the girls and whoops of delight from the boys, an intoxicating jingle of sleigh bells was heard; Lawrence Tracy had found some up in his attic and had tied them on their car. But that noise was not needed. Every variety of horn and siren featured by

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any car builder seemed to be demonstrating just the limit of noise that youthful ardor could extract from it.

In an instant, it seemed, they were on the ice. Nobody cared how he looked, and no girl cared whether a boy asked her to skate with him or not. They just joined hands with the nearest one and started off. There was a constant rhythmic motion around the circle of the lake, and yet individual couples and groups were constantly breaking and reforming. Warm in their thick coats, with furs or woolen scarfs around their necks, with fuzzy tams or peaked caps pulled down over their ears and woolen stockings and stout shoes keeping their feet as warm as toast, the joy of youth and health made them as free from self-consciousness as if they had been glad young animals frolicking in a world which men and women had never entered into. And so the grace of their swaying bodies was a delight to themselves and to their elders who were lookers-on.

"Oh, let's sing! We just must sing!" shouted Philippa, as she passed one of the girls in her class who usually led the singing. A song was started. It happened to be the jolly chorus that Philippa had been laughing

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about a few evenings before. High and sweet and pure and joyous a voice rose above all the others: "I'd like to spend my life in singing—a joyous song, a joyous song!"

"Just *hear* that Henderson kid!" gasped Philippa to Anne with whom she was skating. "Would you think it was the same boy who gasped like a dying fish in school the other day!"

"And the basses—just listen to the bass," Anne laughed. "They're going to drown everything else."

So for the whole long ecstatic evening they skated or tumbled breathless and laughing down on the rugs by the bonfire or drank enlivening hot things while they munched the delicious sandwiches and cakes that Virginia's mother had provided. Philippa often sat happily down by Jeff Randolph and made him laugh so much that he hadn't time to feel badly because the doctor had not been willing to take the cast off his leg and let him try skating, "just this one time." When they skated it was jolly fun and when they rested in the warmth of the fire it was almost better. For there was always something to laugh about and somebody was always starting a song. Some of the boys had brought

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mandolins without being asked. And, although they usually refused to play when they were asked, this evening they started up without being urged, and toward the end of the evening most of the skating was done to the swinging cadence of quite a respectable mandolin club, which boasted also a guitar that no one had known Jeff possessed. And then, just before leaving, they snuggled down around the fire and, while the boys fed it constantly, story after story made them laugh, or brought the delightful shiver of some suggestion of the mystic, or betrayed that shy idealism which the American boy or girl usually hides jealously from view. Gazing into the glowing heart of a great fire, with the heavens flooded with mystic light above them, and with the mystery of the forest in waiting just outside their little circle of light and warmth and human fellowship, tongues were loosened and the best of life was reached. They felt *that*, even to the ones among them who would have been least suspected of such thoughts. So they lingered to the last possible moment, and when it was evident that they must go they demolished the happy camp they had made with a regret that was almost reverent.

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"Gosh!" said Philippa, rousing from something that was almost sleep as they neared home. "We sure did something when we started that party."

"Virginia, aren't you glad I thought of it," said Anne.

CHAPTER XXV

THAT evening Philippa, who had been at a meeting of the Young Citizens, came home to an unusually quiet house. Doreen was out. When she opened the door of the living room she was surprised to find father and mother there.

"Gosh!" Philippa said. "I didn't know you were here; you weren't making any noise at all."

"Philippa! Please don't say, 'Gosh,'" said Mrs. Gale, absently. Her eyes were very bright and she had a deep pink color in her cheeks. And she spoke with but perfunctory reproof.

"Why didn't you bring Jeff in?" was Mr. Gale's contribution in an absent-minded but smiling fashion.

"Because I didn't want him to come in, I suppose," Philippa said, ungraciously. Then a spirit of rigid truthfulness compelled her to add, "Not that he wanted to."

"Oh, Philippa! You haven't quarreled with Jeff?" Mrs. Gale's voice had the right

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inflections for surprise and reproach, but she didn't look either unduly concerned or censorious. In fact, she seemed a little vague and confused.

"No, we haven't quarreled, but we didn't agree about whether the people in the district ought to vote or not and I didn't like his kind of arguments."

"Perhaps he thought your arguments were 'just different ways of saying how you wanted to have things,'" the father quoted.

"No, it wasn't that way at all," Philippa had said when she began to understand that her father was teasing her. Her face grew very red. There was a struggle, but she finally did laugh. "All the same" (it was allowable to be cross about Jeff although it wasn't to be cross with daddy) "*I don't* like the sneering sort of way Jeff has when he debates a point, and I don't see why I bothered with him at all. He isn't half as nice, now that he's getting all right again. I took a lot of trouble for nothing."

Mr. Gale and Mrs. Gale exchanged a glance which Philippa detected.

"What is it? What do you mean? You look as if there were some joke?" she demanded, suddenly tormented with curiosity.

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"Oh—nothing that we can tell you," they both said. But they had great difficulty in persuading her that they meant what they said.

"There's something you're hiding from me? Is it something about Jeff? Oh, is it something about Christmas?"

Mr. Gale seemed to confer silently with his wife. At last he nodded.

"I think we can say it is Christmas," he said, solemnly. Upon this Philippa went up in the air again, and it was a long time before she simmered down sufficiently to make it humanly possible to go to bed.

Again the next morning the child had a feeling that there was something unusual on hand. Her father's blue eyes had a gleam in them and there was a tone in his voice as if he were excited. He laughed easily and ate very little breakfast. There was some secret understanding between him and mother. Philippa felt it. When her father was ready to leave, Philippa's keen eyes detected something in the way he stood, very straight and as if eager to be about things, that had not been there the day before.

"Gosh! daddy—"

"Oh, Philippa, please don't say 'Gosh.'"

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"No'm, I won't. But, daddy, you *do* look young to-day."

The outspoken surprise in his young daughter's voice might have been flattering or not to a father, as one chose to take it. But daddy's teeth gleamed out in a sudden, boyish smile. There was an eager, keen force in his face, the eaglelike something that Philippa sometimes perceived. Mother must have felt it, too, for she gave the lapel of his coat a caressing touch and then shoved him laughingly out of the door. Then she ran upstairs almost as if she wanted to get out of the way of questions.

"Has anything happened? Do you know of anything?" Philippa's curiosity was almost unbearable. "They seem so different to-day."

"No, I didn't notice anything." Doreen awakened out of what seemed to be a pleasant dream.

"You're *sure* they haven't told you anything?" Philippa persisted, suspiciously. "Oh, I guess it's La's letter. Funny that everybody seems so specially happy to-day, and yet it isn't about the same thing and I don't know anything about it."

Doreen blushed a little.

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"Did I seem 'specially happy'?" she queried, vaguely.

Then she, too, went upstairs and Philippa was left alone in an inexplicable and non-committal world.

If there was one thing that made Philippa cross it was to have her curiosity unsatisfied. But her beginning-of-a-grievance was dropped as soon as she began meeting girls and boys on the way to school. And when, the day over and the family about the dinner table again, she might have claimed her legal right as a member of the family to know what was going on, the electrical tingle of expectancy seemed to have gone out of the air. Mr. Gale was deep in some serious train of thought, Mrs. Gale looked a little spent, and Doreen had become her own tranquil self again. Cheated of a sensation, Philippa was distinctly irritated. But when her mother's eyes met hers, something in their unquestioning confidence renewed the deep experience that lay between them. Whatever mother and father wanted to keep back from her they were perfectly right in doing. And she, as their loyal partner in the business of living, must do her best to play the role they wanted her to fill. Still, she did wish, if

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there was anything happening, they would tell her soon.

Above all, she must not ask for her allowance. Wednesday and Thursday passed in deadly calm; Friday also. Another week went by, with Philippa becoming agonized as the shopping days passed and no mention was made of the allowance. Friday morning, the 21st, dawned, clear, cold, snappy, ideal Christmas weather. There were only four shopping days left, and she had bought none of her presents and had no money to buy them with. At school nobody talked of anything else. She dreaded to go to school. All their reading lessons had a bearing on the season; practicing Christmas carols was a part of every day's routine; problems in arithmetic and algebra turned on buying Christmas gifts. At recess the girls were all probing to find out what she was going to give, and hinting so industriously about what they were going to give to her that she had hard work not guessing. Anne and Virginia wanted her to go downtown with them the next day.

In the face of all this Philippa had held loyally to her determination not to ask for the allowance. But that Friday morning

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adherence to a principle was a good deal of a hardship.

"I wonder if daddy would mind so very much if I asked for a part of it to-night," she thought, desperately, while she was supposed to be doing some originals in percentage of profit on Christmas stocks. "Everything is being picked over. And the shops are getting dreadfully crowded. Anne said so. He had probably just forgotten all about it. He said it would be all right in a few days. I wonder"—her eyes had strayed toward Jeff's desk and observed that he was absent—"I wonder if I'd better give Jeff a present. If it had been a little while ago of course I'd have had to. But I don't believe it would make much difference to him now. He's getting so friendly with all the boys 'n' everything, I suppose he doesn't think much about me lately. It looks almost as if he didn't want to talk to me." She raised her head in her own independent way and began vigorously to put down figures. She wouldn't admit to herself that a little hurt feeling had arisen with the thought of Jeff.

Just then some one came into the room. Why, it was Doreen!

"Something must be the matter!" Phi-

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lippa had a feeling as if the floor had dropped out of the room and she was suspended in space. But Doreen was smiling at Miss Graham, who had been her teacher, too, and of whom she was very fond. Doreen couldn't smile like that if anything was the matter. Miss Graham smiled, too, and nodded her head toward Philippa's desk. The next minute Doreen was beside her little sister.

"Mother has asked to have you excused to-day," she said. There was a spark of excitement in Doreen's blue eyes, although she was trying to look very grown up and dignified. "We are all going somewhere together."

Philippa turned red with embarrassment, for everybody's eyes were on her and Doreen.

"Why in the world couldn't I have been told before I left home?" she demanded, crossly.

"We didn't know then. Father phoned. Come on and I'll tell you."

When they were in the cloakroom, "What is it?" Philippa asked, breathlessly.

"Wait until we get outside."

"Gosh! Doreen! I'm going to blow up and bust unless you tell me. You needn't be afraid."

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But, beyond saying absent-mindedly, "You oughtn't to say 'Gosh,' Philippa," Doreen kept her lips tightly closed.

When they were outside, "*Now!*" demanded Philippa.

CHAPTER XXVI

“THE bill is coming up to-day.” Doreen was evidently trying to hold on to herself. But her voice was unsteady.

“What bill?” Christmas and her allowance had entirely driven everything else out of her mind. Anyway, the bill in itself had never been very clear in her mind because of all the years in which she had persistently shut her ears when daddy began to talk about it. Even Zeb Smith didn’t make the bill anything but a means to an end—her allowance.

“Why, *our* bill—the Postmasters’ Salary Readjustment bill!” Inwardly Philippa noted that Doreen was cross or—something. Her voice had taken on a sharp edge which came only with moments of perturbation.

“But, I thought daddy was sure it wasn’t going to pass this time?”

“Well, we are not sure that it will. Now you mustn’t get your hopes up too much,” Doreen warned, in elderly fashion; while her

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own cheeks were flushed their rare lovely pink of excitement and her eyes were at their darkest and brightest. "But something very wonderful happened a week ago. The Senator of the subcommittee who was to have made the report died very suddenly. Of course, that was very sad, but we didn't know him and, anyway, another man was appointed to fill his place right off and he is favorable to the bill. And he saw a chance to report it when he thought there would be a good chance of its being acted on. You see, now a majority of the subcommittee is for it. And that's how it's all happened. Isn't it wonderful? Last week father thought it was hopeless."

"It 'll be nice to have it got through." Philippa took up the strain with calm confidence. "Just before Christmas, too. We can—"

"Now, Philippa, *don't!* I might have known you would go off just like this. Nothing's certain yet. They have to vote on it in the Senate after the bill's reported. That's what we're going to the Capitol to see—that is, if it's voted on to-day. But, oh dear! if it should go against us, after all, and you're so certain now, you'll get excited

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and go on dreadfully, and that will be so hard for mother and father."

"I sha'n't, either!" Indignation drove everything but this slander on her character out of Philippa's mind. "Did she— I don't believe mother thought that."

"No, she didn't say anything about it. But I'm so afraid you will. And they've had such a hard time. Oh dear! I wish Bayard were here!" Doreen, who certainly was not her usual calm self, winked her eyes hard for a few minutes.

"No, she wouldn't. She knows. And I guess I'm just as anxious not to make it hard for them as you are, Doreen." Philippa spoke with much dignity and walked a few minutes in impressive silence.

But she couldn't be expected, of course, to keep this mood long. When they got to the house she was in great form, her eyes snapping, her cheeks red.

"Shall I go and put on my best dress, mother?" she asked, in her steadiest and most reliable tone as they met.

"No, there isn't time," Mrs. Gale said, quickly, with a glance at her husband. "We will have to hurry. The taxi ought to be here now."

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The *taxi!* Then it was truly an important occasion. Philippa felt an awe that she had not felt before. She knew very well that the cost of a taxi from their suburban home to the station was no light matter. It was to be considered possible only at epoch-making times, when they were going off to Maine laden with bags and bundles and lunch boxes. They hadn't been to the Cove for four years now. She felt a sudden homesick qualm at the thought. She always missed the Cove afresh every time she thought of it. The next instant came a confused idea that maybe, if the bill went through, they might all go the next summer. That made her heart throb as the news about the bill, even, had not done. But she put the thought of the dear Cove out of her mind, as she had had to do many, many times.

Mr. Gale was walking up and down the piazza, looking every other second at his watch.

"But, dear, you said it was only a chance that it would come up before noon," Mrs. Gale said, a little timidly. "Oh, there's the cab, surely."

It was, and the next minute they were skimming smoothly through the unfamiliar streets in unfamiliar ease. Philippa, settling

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herself with her own version of the air worn by the effete rich, felt a new respect for "that old post-office bill," as she had sometimes called it to herself in her unregenerate moments. If the mere suspicion of its passing brought about calling a taxi, it must be a highly important thing.

"Are you cold?" Mrs. Gale asked, anxiously, of her pale, preoccupied husband.

"I think not," he said, vaguely.

Philippa had been to the Capitol a few days before, of course. But this was different. To file along silently to the very front seat (for there were very few people in the gallery) and to take places there with the realization that the very usual-looking men sitting at the desks in the big room below or wandering restlessly about the aisles and corridor at the back had power over the fortunes of the Gale family, made Philippa gaze at them with fascinated interest.

But the result of those minutes of silent scrutiny was distinctly disappointing.

"I'm afraid they can't understand the bill as well as daddy does," she confided to Doreen in a perfectly audible whisper. "It has very big words in it and they don't look very clever."

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Several people near them turned to look at the child with amusement, and Doreen was quite embarrassed. Mrs. Gale smiled sympathetically—perhaps she had had her doubts, too—and looked up at her husband to see if he had heard. But Mr. Gale was oblivious of everything about him. His boldly cut profile was set in stony lines. Only the little pulse in his cheek, which always marked extreme agitation, was beating rapidly.

“Oh, if it should—if it *could*—go wrong! How can he bear it?” she thought. Her heart seemed to stand still with the thought, and then she felt suffocated. It took all the will power of which she was mistress to sit still—calm to all outward appearance—until her laboring lungs finally seemed to have taken in enough air to convince her that she was not really suffocating. Then she took command of herself again and was able to practice what had become a wifely religion with her.

“I’ll think nothing but success. If that other thing comes, there’ll be time enough to meet it then. But now belief is the one thing that can help him.

“Dick.” Her warm and happy voice

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roused him as nothing else could have done. And when he looked at her cheerful confidence the icy paralysis of his suspense was dissolved. "Do show me these men whom I've got to be grateful to for the rest of my life. I do hope they look the part. It'll help so when we ask them to dinner."

When he laughed his face was twenty years younger.

"Not Dubois," he said. "I will say this foreshortened view takes an unfair advantage of him. After all, his architecture's no worse than that of the squat gods that some of our Oriental brothers burn incense to. There he is."

They bent over the railing to see the bald-headed series of more or less concentric curves that he pointed out.

"There's Senator Dubois, Philippa." Mrs. Gale vivaciously passed information on to her daughters. "And that man—no, to your left there—is Gregory of Arkansas. They're both friendly to the bill."

Both the girls excitedly tried to locate the gentlemen pointed out.

"Oh, Gosh!" Philippa said, disgustedly. "I didn't know Senators looked like *that!* The Roman senators didn't use to."

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"Philippa, don't say 'Gosh,'" Mrs. Gale began, purely from sense of habit.

"Perhaps—" Mr. Gale began, but, for some reason, was silenced by his wife.

"To think of those men setting themselves up as better than daddy and—"

"They don't set themselves up, Pip. They're put there by the wish of the people of their states."

"I like that one," pointing to a slender and well-groomed gentleman making his lordly way down the aisle. "I'm sure he must be for our bill."

"That? Oh, that's the secretary of Mason of—" But Philippa had turned disgustedly away. The next minute they heard her cry out:

"Why—that's—no it isn't—yes it *is* Jeff! He must have made a mistake. His father's only a Representative. And what in the world is he staying away from school for?"

Mr. Gale rose hurriedly after an aside to his wife.

"Where's daddy going?"

"He wants to find out when the bill is going to be reported."

"I can't catch Jeff's eye. I guess he's here to get some points about the club."

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But Mrs. Gale didn't hear. She was looking intently to a point, almost directly in front of the presiding officer's desk, where her husband had located a certain man. As if it were a visible answer to the question she wanted answered, a little page darted up to him and put a note before him—a note her husband had, in all probability, sent. The man evidently questioned the page, then wrote hurriedly. The youngster scudded back. A minute or so later Mr. Gale came back, smiling nervously.

“He has just had the Vice-President's assurance that the bill will be read in a very few minutes. It is the next thing on the calendar.”

Then there seemed to be nothing that anyone but Philippa could think to say. But Philippa, having been put in possession of a printed diagram of the Senate Chamber, with the desks numbered and corresponding numbers listed at the bottom and the names of the Senators occupying the desks, was having a highly exciting time identifying such men as had drifted in to take their places. In happy unconsciousness of the fact that she was identifying secretaries rather oftener than Senators, and of the more serious blun-

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der of having confused the Democratic with the Republican side—in consequence, getting everybody wrong—she kept up a running fire of comment, favorable or unfavorable as the case might be. As she had a rooted prejudice against either mustaches or beards, and an equally firm conviction that there was an invariable correspondence between a man's figure and his mental and moral attributes, her convictions as to the ruling element in that most august body differed widely from the general opinion of the country. Deeply disappointed in her father's two adherents, in one case because of his avoirdupois and in the other because he mistakenly wore a beard, she took comfort in a conviction that two machine politicians who had balked her father at every turn were on the eve of regeneration and would suddenly develop into ardent supporters. She based this prophecy upon the fact that one man walked like a soldier and the other had a nice smile.

Occasionally Mrs. Gale glanced at her husband, afraid that the childish chatter might disturb him. But his thoughts were where Philippa's clear little voice could not penetrate. He was absolutely still except

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for the nervous motion of his right hand that ceaselessly opened and shut a penknife that he had taken out to sharpen a pencil with—which he had then forgotten. As for herself, the childish, happy inconsequence was rather pleasant than the reverse. Doreen showed no undue trace of excitement. But once, when she met her mother's eye, she slipped an understanding hand within Mrs. Gale's, with no word to mar the exquisite sympathy of the action.

All at once Mrs. Gale felt an electrical thrill run through her husband's arm. She leaned forward. The clerk was reading. At first the involved legal phraseology told her nothing. Then she caught the words, "fourth-class postmasters," and sat back in her chair, relaxed and content. The bill was really being read.

"Mother, hasn't he got a mustache like a walrus?" Philippa leaned forward to say to her mother. "I do hate to have men wear hair on their faces. I won't let my husband or any of my children." Her mother hushed her with a significant glance. And Philippa, with bright eyes, leaned forward and listened. Then, as the drone went on and on, a keen look of disappointment came over

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her face. "I thought he'd say something about daddy," she whispered to Doreen. "Is it really our bill?"

Satisfied with a nod, she settled herself to listen in earnest. Mr. Gale, with no expression on his face, might have been made of stone, save for the nervous opening and shutting of the knife. The monotonous sound and the involved repetitions of the legal jargon—of all methods of human expression the most absurd to anyone who has been trained to know what clear English expression is—hypnotized them all into drowsiness. It seemed too absurd to have *this* the moment they had all talked about so long and looked forward to with such excitement. Philippa yawned lengthily.

At last the clerk, they could see, reached the last page. With infinite leisure he handed the printed bill over to the official stenographer. The president of the Senate appeared to be making some casual remarks. Several men, none of whom Philippa recognized, arose leisurely to their feet. Then one of them began to speak, in casual conversational tones. Another, on the other side of the chamber, spoke with a heated emphasis that seemed, even to the listening child,

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purely for oratorical effect. The last of the standing gentlemen seemed to direct a question at Senator Dubois. The fat gentleman lumbered to his feet. Philippa couldn't understand what he said at all. It was all very puzzling. The presiding officer put in a word or two. Philippa stopped looking.

As she was leaning back, trying to decide from the expression on her father's face, what it all meant, there came an enlivening moment when a scattering but still considerable volume of sound arose, followed by a still more scattering and obviously much weaker one.

"Good!" Mr. Gale said. "I'm sure the ayes have it."

"Oh, daddy, has the bill passed?" Philippa's sibilant whisper reached the ears of everybody in the gallery and many heads were turned to her, Jeff's among them.

"No, indeed, girlie," her father replied, but still with evident satisfaction. "They have only consented to an immediate consideration of the bill. The other crowd tried to have the report tabled, and the motion, too, which would have meant that we might not have got it out this session."

"But—"

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"It's favorable, Pip. The first step won. But Mapes— They may know they have votes enough to beat it. Now we'll all have lunch in the restaurant downstairs. Ask Jeff. Why, the boy seems to have gone. Come! I'll get you settled and then be off. I have to get hold of a man."

CHAPTER XXVII

AFTER lunch there was the same business of men popping up on all sides and talking. Philippa had grown somewhat accustomed by this time to the different kinds of language they used. So she could understand much of what she could hear. And she understood enough to make her grow uneasy. What they seemed to talk the most about was the great amount of money involved in these cases. They had a way of speaking that made it sound like a monstrous thing to harass the poor government with asking it to pay out another vast sum of money—all of which would have to be borne by the taxpayers of the country. The taxpayers seemed to be the only ones to be pitied; and when Senator Smith spoke of the "attorney" who would reap "a small fortune from these cases," with dramatic scorn for a malefactor in his voice, Philippa started up with intense indignation. It sounded as if the man was slandering her own father. She turned with

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the greatest sympathy to the slandered one, but he was smiling quite gayly.

"There Mapes shows his hand," Philippa heard him saying to mother. Mapes, she knew, was a chief clerk who had always been unfriendly. Philippa couldn't understand how he could be so cheerful. Everybody seemed to be speaking against the bill, not for it. Or when some one of the Senators, who were supposed to be favorable, did speak, it was about something that didn't seem to have anything to do with the post-masters or her father—about whether something was "constitutional" or what the "Attorney General" had said. Philippa was getting tired and a little peevish. "I didn't know people could talk so much," she whispered to Doreen. "Even Anne, when she gets started laying down the law at the club, has to stop sometime."

All at once the child started out of a dreary sort of daze. A new voice was heard. It was a voice that must have had greater carrying power than the others. Or was it because it sounded like something she had heard before? Philippa strained her eyes to see who it was. It was a tall man with a strong, clean-shaven face, dark eyes, and thick black hair. It was—

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"Daddy! Isn't that Jeff's father?"

It was her mother who answered, soothingly:

"Yes, dear, it is Mr. Randolph."

"But I didn't know he was a Senator. I thought he was a Representative!"

"He was, dear, until about a week ago. But Senator Redfern, the man on the Post Office subcommittee who died, was from Mr. Randolph's state, and Mr. Randolph was appointed to fill out the unexpired term of office."

"But why didn't you tell me?" Philippa was beginning to be indignant. *Doreen—"*

"Doreen didn't know, either. We didn't want to raise your hopes too much."

"They're raised now, so what is the difference? I'm certain the bill will pass now. I know Jeff's father would do anything he could for the postmasters as soon as he found how much they need the money. He was just as interested when I told him and Jeff about Zeb Smith—that time when Jeff was sick, you know, and I was trying to amuse him. And Mr. Randolph's awfully kind, anyway."

"Now don't be sure, dear. He's only one man among many. He is favorable, it's

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true, and began to fight for the bill as soon as he understood it. He asked your father to explain it to him as soon as he was appointed—before that—as soon as he knew there was a possibility that he would be. But he can't do it all, and while the bill has other friends, the people against it are going to fight very hard. There are so many chances against it, in fact, that we have all got to be calm and sensible and make up our minds to be brave whatever happens."

"Yes'm. But I'm sure it 'll pass. Oh-h-h-h! I'll bet that's why Jeff has been so queer lately. I thought he must be angry about something."

In her confidence that the bill was in competent hands, Philippa paid very little attention to what immediately followed. She spent her time watching for Jeff's return. When he did come back she tried to catch his eye. But Jeff refused to look in their direction; in fact, on one occasion when Philippa's glance did intercept his he immediately averted his eyes, looking, to all appearances, as if he had been convicted of some shameful crime. Upon which Philippa, with much dignity, elevated her head and turned away.

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Some man was talking in such an impassioned tone that Philippa listened in the hope of hearing something really interesting. But he was just reeling off a lot of figures.

"Why doesn't somebody tell them about Zeb Smith?" Philippa demanded of Doreen, in what she fondly thought was a low tone. "If they just heard about him and knew how badly he needed the money, they'd *have* to pass the bill. Don't you think I might ask daddy to ask Jeff's father to do it?"

Not at all understanding why Doreen thought that would not be advisable, but resolved to be, at all costs, perfectly good and not trouble mother and daddy, Philippa subsided. A few minutes later she leaned forward in high expectancy. Jeff's father had the floor.

In the face of the old-fashioned, spread-eagle, political oratory which still was the chosen manner of utterance of most of those who had spoken, Mr. Randolph used that simple, direct method of address which the unwary opponent is apt to consider makes a man, "no orator at all." But he had a voice that, while he appeared to raise it not at all, somehow penetrated to every corner. People had to listen whether they wanted to or not.

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What he said seemed addressed to each man, woman, child, personally. Every word that was not absolutely necessary was omitted. His plan was simple to the verge of baldness. He gave first the significant part of the statute under which these postmasters had been appointed. Then he sketched, in a few sentences, the conditions of growth of the country that had changed wholly the actual amount of service demanded of these men.

Then—and here Philippa looked at Doreen with triumphant eyes—he did actually speak of Zeb Smith. He read a few sentences from the letter which Mr. Gale had quoted to his own family on Thanksgiving night. He alluded to other cases like this one—of Luke Simpson, of Joseph White, of Hiram Cole. He read an occasional telling sentence, in the simple confidences of these men to the attorney who, alone out of the more than hundred millions of the great country, had championed their cause. There was apparently not the slightest desire to work upon anyone's emotions in the conversational tone of voice in which Mr. Randolph recorded these things. It was a plain man wholly occupied in placing the facts in the case before his colleagues. So people were sur-

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prised and a little ashamed of themselves when a word from a letter of an unknown man relating the rather unequal struggle of the average man with hard conditions brought an embarrassing mist to the eyes. As Randolph went on, a sudden epidemic of throat-clearing, coughing, blowing of noses, followed his discourse.

But he veered suddenly and briskly from the personal touch to the impersonal conclusion. He gave the aggregate earnings which an equal number of men in the districts served by these postmasters might have reasonably considered the proceeds of two years' work at that period. Subtracting the amount actually paid in salaries to the claimants, he called the remainder the government's moral obligation to these seven thousand postmasters for the use of two years of their lives. In comparison with this total the amount estimated by the Post Office Department as the sum total due under the readjustment sought by the bill was small. The slogan, "Almost two millions mulcted from the hard-working taxpayers of the country" lost its force. It was less than half the "government's moral obligation." Mr. Randolph closed:

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"This is not a matter of charity or of sentiment. It is a matter of common business honesty. No country that does not pay honestly for service honestly rendered can expect to be honestly served. No country that repudiates its just debts can stand. Mr. President, I move that the debate on this Bill be closed and that the vote be taken."

All of the leaders of the opposition were on their feet, seeking recognition by the presiding officer. That gentleman consulted his watch.

"The Chair rules that the two hours allowed for debate have expired. The Senators are asked to take a standing vote. The ayes will stand."

As the Senators in favor stood, Mr. Gale leaned tensely forward and began to count. Philippa also counted—all four of the Gales, in fact.

Mr. Gale finished first.

"Sixty-eight present. There may be some Senators paired. I make thirty-six—too slim a majority if everyone present votes."

Philippa had counted forty, but said nothing. Maybe she had included some secretaries!

"The noes will stand."

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"Twenty-eight." Philippa, this time, made the count first. "Oh, daddy, we've won!"

Mr. Gale was keeping a painfully rigid hold on himself.

"Wait—it's not over. They can ask for roll call, and in the meantime hustle some of their men in from the cloak room or offices."

Sure enough, Senator Smith was on his feet, demanding that the roll be called. And while he was speaking a number of men hurriedly left the room.

"We'll see what they can do now," Mr. Gale said between his teeth.

Philippa glanced at her father in utter confusion. But a glance at his set face warned her she must not ask questions now. So she sat in forced silence, eying the scene below, which all at once seemed utterly disorderly, men going out and coming in. Finally the President's gavel fell.

Then began a long, tedious process. The clerk read the names of the Senators, alphabetically by states. Mr. Gale marked each vote as it was given on the printed slip he held. It took more than ten minutes. As certain votes were given, Mrs. Gale could see her husband's face become more stern or relax a little. Philippa tried to keep the

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count, but got utterly confused. When the last name was reached she was in utter woe, for, according to her record, the bill was defeated. She was so absorbed in trying to keep from crying that she did not see her mother's face. When she saw father and mother squeezing each other's hands like two children she thought they were trying to console each other. That made it almost impossible to keep from crying.

She was standing a little apart, a forlorn, desolate little girl, her heart filled with rage against those who had "cheated" her father out of success, when she heard some one at her elbow say, in a casual tone:

"Oh, hello, Philippa!" She whirled around. It was Jeff.

"Say, I sure am glad the bill passed." Jeff's pleasure for once got the better of his embarrassment. He was grinning broadly.

"Wh - wh - what?" Philippa stammered. But Jeff was far ahead of her, almost at the door.

"Gosh!" said Philippa, out loud, although nobody heard her. "I don't even know how to count."

She looked at father and mother, so radiantly happy that they looked hardly older

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than Doreen. And Doreen, the dignified and self-contained, was hugging her mother and laughing and crying at the same time. Just at that moment Mrs. Gale looked around for Philippa — missing something. And Philippa, darting toward them, was seized by father's hand.

“Why isn't Bayard here?” sobbed Doreen.

“Oh, look!” cried Philippa, in horror.
“Look at Daddy's hand!”

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE blood was streaming down his wrist. It was Philippa who first got out a handkerchief.

"In a minute it would have stained his nice clean cuff!" she said, as tragically as if that would have been the worst thing imaginable. She was wrapping the handkerchief around the finger and was lifting his hand.

"Hold it above your head, daddy. That's what they tell us to do at school." Mr. Gale, so dazed that he looked absolutely foolish, was contemplating his young daughter and his hand as if neither quite belonged to him. The blood was soaking through the small bandage.

"Don't know what happened," Mr. Gale said, confusedly. Then, his eye falling on the floor, "I see. Must have been that knife. Had forgotten I had it in my hand. Oh, that's all right, Pip. Enough fuss. Can't stop."

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By this time Doreen had added her handkerchief, and Mrs. Gale was looking around distractedly.

"Indeed, Dick, you'll have to have it attended to. Hold it under running water."

"Haven't time, I tell you. I've got to get the word to them. Think of its going through the last day before the recess!"

"To whom? Oh, it's getting worse all the time! Who's the nearest doctor?"

"The postmasters, of course. They can hear in time for Christmas. I've got to begin wiring them—"

"But the President hasn't signed it yet."

"No doubt of that. It's in the Post Office bill. Besides, Randolph knows him—from his state—says there'll be no difficulty. But I've got to get at it."

"But you'll have to stop long enough to have this attended to. Doreen—"

By this time, in that strange way in which, all at once, a place where you think you know no one is full of people you know, several of their friends began to come toward them. Among them was Jeff.

"Wait a minute." He had opened and folded into a compact bandage a large handkerchief, wrapped it around the finger in

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place of the blood-soaked ones, and, knotting the end and inserting a pencil in the knot, was twisting it. After a minute or so the flow of blood ceased. Mr. Gale, who had submitted with some impatience to all this fuss which was keeping him from his real business, had to yield to further interruptions by people who came forward and insisted on congratulating him. When the way was clear again:

“Now I must get to the telegraph office. Mary, suppose you phone to the office for me, or perhaps I'd better go there. We'll have to write them all out.”

“What *do* you mean, Dick? You don't mean to say you expect to wire all your clients—seven thousand of them. Why, We'd have to mortgage the house to do it!”

He looked at her vaguely.

“Oh yes, I suppose it would. But I *want* them to know. They've *got* to know. Think what a Christmas it 'll be for them. They've waited so long. Oh, Mary, we've *got* to do it for them!”

“How about giving it to some news service? They'll all see it in their local papers, won't they? Or be told?”

It was Doreen who made this simple and

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very practical suggestion. Mother and father looked at her with actual awe.

"A Daniella come to judgment! Say, Mary, I begin to think this thing *has* done me up a little. That was about as asinine—!"

He laughed. And the laughter was as refreshing as a dozen vacation trips and two dozen sanitariums could not have been. They all laughed, foolishly, consumedly. And when they had sobered up a little, induced to do so by curious glances that were being cast in their direction, it was again a sane and stable, if unusually joyous, world they found themselves in.

"All right, Doreen. And in reward for your superior intelligence I'll let you take this telegram to the Press rooms. Get Jeff to go with you, and Philippa, too. She ought to be in it. Yes, and wire the news to Bayard first. George! It makes a man of me again to have a chance to send such news! Tell him to come home at once. I'll need him, and it's only a day or two earlier than he would be starting, anyhow. I think your mother and I will go home—walk all the way if it's necessary to get rid of some of the surplus excitement. I could easily do without a little of it. And then— Oh, then—"

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He stopped so long that they found themselves waiting in actual suspense for the conclusion.

“And then, won't I just—sleep!”

He filled his lungs with a deep, long, satisfying breath. And nobody but his wife knew—and she only partially—what burden he must forget before he could enter upon happiness.

“Oh dear!” Philippa said, conscience-stricken. “I kept forgetting all the time how hard it was for mother and father. And we were all going to help so much and I didn't do one single thing!”

“Why—you—” father began, impulsively. But a warning look from mother stopped him. “You all helped more than you know,” he finished, a little tamely.

“And this must be my fortune, all mixed up with everybody else's. Only it was a dark man—and daddy's fair.”

As the father and mother started on the long walk in cold, snappy air they had prescribed for themselves, Mr. Gale said:

“I yield to your judgment, of course, where the children are concerned. But I don't quite see why the child shouldn't have known. It was certainly due to the child

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that Randolph was interested. As soon as he got started he was interested because of the justice of the claims. He wouldn't have acted if he had not been convinced of that. Then, too, there are a great many claims in his district. But it was Philippa's chatter about Zeb Smith when she had Thanksgiving dinner with them that caught his attention. He was both amused and touched by the way she sat up there and tried to entertain them. But she made it all so real and human that he couldn't forget it. He told me so the first time he took the matter up with me. And the coincidence of his being appointed to poor Redfern's vacant place clinched the business. But what's this about a dark man? Of course, the child was entirely unconscious about the effect she was producing."

"It's just for that reason that I don't want her to know it. I want her to be able to tell her little stories and act her little dramas in her natural desire to entertain people and make them happy without having a conscious object but just that desire. You asked about the dark man? Oh, that's just a foolish card fortune. Not but that Mr. Randolph is dark enough to look the part.

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Oh, *Dick!* What a Christmas we'll make for the children! I'm going to be just foolish this time. But I'm starting so late. I'm afraid it'll be hard work to get things ready."

"I don't quite see. We have glittering prospects, of course, but—we mightn't—" For the first time a shade fell over Mr. Gale's face.

"Dick, for just about all my life I've been giving pocket handkerchiefs at Christmas when what I wanted to give was fur coats—in a Pickwickian sense. This year I'm going to *splurge!*"

CHAPTER XXIX

PHILIPPA dear, I think it would really be better for you not to sit up until Bayard comes. His train may be delayed still more. And you'll get so excited. You're batting your eyes now." Mrs. Gale spoke gently, for she knew how her little daughter had set her heart on being up when the adored Big Brother got home.

"Oh, mother!" With a gigantic effort Philippa kept back the tears. But her effort at self-control made her disappointment all the more piteous. "I don't want to tease, if you really think I ought to go to bed. But, indeed, mother, I don't believe I *could* be any more excited than I am. And going to bed only makes that worse. I'm afraid, no matter how I tried, I couldn't go to sleep."

"Good gracious, Pip, your eyes are just exactly as big as saucers!" Doreen tried her hand at a change of subject. But Philippa's eyes were still beseechingly fixed upon the

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Source of Rightful Authority. It was too much for the Source to withstand.

"Oh, well, it will be only two hours or so more. I think you might stay up just this one special time. After all, you can sleep late in the morning."

"'Late in the morning'—oh, mother, now that I've got my allowance, and it'll be Saturday, I'll have to start downtown just as soon as I can get through breakfast." Philippa's face was again a study in consternation.

Mrs. Gale laughed good-humoredly.

"I think we'll just have to give up—suspend all laws—call this a moratorium."

It was hard to say whether Philippa was more full of gratitude or of care. She withdrew to her own room in order to have quiet in which to make out her list for the next day's shopping. The other members of the family, in the restless hours before Bayard could be looked for—he had begged them not to meet him since all trains were late—often passed her door. Whenever they did so they saw the child, with impressive seriousness of countenance, bent over her writing desk. Usually she was chewing the end of a pencil. Once when her mother paused a moment Philippa looked up rather sadly.

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"Oh dear! twenty-five dollars seemed enough to do everything I wanted to. But now when I put everybody down and add it all up, it doesn't."

"It won't be that way with the Fortune," Mrs. Gale added, jubilantly. "That's going to be enough to put everything down on paper, add it up, and *multiply*, and still have enough." She seized Philippa around her substantial waist and pulled her to her feet, dancing around and around to the jig she sang. Panting and out of breath, they had to stop for a minute, and Philippa had just said, adoringly, "Oh, you dear, funny, little mother!" and mother had responded, "I believe you only really love when I'm foolish," when there came a sound of hurrying feet on the piazza. The next instant Bayard's jubilant voice sang out:

"Hello there! How's the royal family? Got the crown jewels safe? Merry Christmas! Gee! What kind of a morgue have you got here? All been murdered for your wealth already? Almost as speedy as New York? Just one of the little penalties of being rich!"

Laughing, scurrying, they all ran. Somewhere on the staircase they met. And then

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the Gale family looked for a minute like nothing so much as the center of a most satisfactory scrimmage.

Bayard at last extricated himself, and slung out his hand to his father's.

"I'll tell the world I'm glad. And proud! Who says the right team doesn't go to the goal when a real man's got the ball?"

The two hands gripped—hard. It was man to man, level eye to level eye. Perhaps that was the first moment that Richard Gale really knew that he had won.

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN Bayard came down to breakfast the next morning he found four persons making a pretense of eating breakfast in the midst of feverish discussion. Philippa even had a writing pad beside her plate so she could jot down ideas as they occurred to her! Mr. Gale was tense; Mrs. Gale jumped at every sound and clenched her hands when somebody almost upset a cup of coffee. Doreen's manner was a shade overpatient when Philippa, for the fifth time, asked her opinion about some item she had on her list.

Bayard surveyed them all, a twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Oh, Bayard, *won't* you meet me down town?" pleaded Philippa. "I want to ask you what you think about—" a consciously meaning look at her father. "Can't you meet me at Dawson's at eleven, first floor?"

"You wanted to meet me at eleven," Mrs. Gale commented. "Of course if you don't—"

"But I do."

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"Could you come to my office some time before noon, Bayard? There are several things I'm wondering if you wouldn't attend to for me." Mr. Gale's face cleared at the cheering thought. "I really don't quite know how I am going to get through everything."

"Surest thing in the world."

"But, Dick, we really ought to get together this morning about that matter," said Mrs. Gale.

"You are quite sure, Doreen, that that Press chap will do his best to have proper publicity given to the bill?"

Bayard laughed outright.

"What you people really want is a Lord of Misrule. What they used to have in England, you know, in the old days. A chap to take charge of the revels. If we don't have something of the sort, I can just see certain members of the joyous Gale household finishing up at a hospital."

"Truer word was never spoken, Bayard. We need a Lord of Misrule. And you're it." Mrs. Gale laughed mischievously.

But Bayard nodded with all the seriousness in the world.

"I'm the one. Now, see here, folks, I've

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got several ideas rattling around in my bean. Had time to think coming down. You've all been through a pretty wearing time—mother and dad, especially—although, to judge from appearances, Pip is the one really bowed down by weight of responsibility. I've been away from it all. So I'm fresh as a daisy and strong as a horse. Moreover, I'm mightily concerned in making this special Christmas the best ever. One of those things we'll all remember always." His voice had taken on a different, lower tone. "Something that nothing can ever take away from us. If there's one thing more than another that I'm thankful for, it's that we've grown up with the idea that it's more necessary to say right out that you're happy than it is to say you're not. I remember when muzz said, 'The one advantage that our maturity has over your youth is that we know when we're happy and you don't. And I don't see why youth shouldn't be trained to recognize and prize the precious moments instead of always losing the present in looking forward to the future.'"

"Goodness! Did I say that? I never have appreciated how clever I am!" Mrs. Gale interrupted, laughing.

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"You sure did. And it's mighty true doctrine, I've found it. And—chloroform her, somebody, while I operate—it's just another thing we've got to be thankful for, that we've got the kind of mother that's got sense enough to *say* it. I used to think all mothers had, but now I know that's not so. Just as we ought to be thankful we've been brought up to say the nice things we think about one another when we think 'em and to can the other kind, instead of reversing the process, as most families seem to do. Say, I seem to be orating. Want any more?"

"All you've got, boy," dad said.

"Well, we've got a chance here for a big effect. If it was on the stage they'd make a big hit with it. But, ten chances to one, if we don't plan a bit we'll get into an exhausting whirl and everyone of us get so tired and confused that we'll end up almost as peevish as we used to be Christmas night when we were all little kids. Why can't we be a little artistic?" He showed all his white teeth in his own beguiling grin as he asked the question, but he hurried on without waiting for the answer. "I'll say I'd like the chance to edit, cut, stage, this Christmas and make it perfect in four acts; suspense, philosophical

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crisis in the third act; emotional climax in the fourth—all strictly according to precepts of Lit. VII. Want to let me be stage manager?"

"Yes. Fine idea. I'd love it. Gosh! Do!" Everybody assented.

"All right, then. It's understood. Then I do everything everyone else is too tired to do. Dad and muzz mustn't do one thing they don't *want* to do—just self-indulgently want. All the other holiday chores, amiable paupers, old family retainers, debatable cousins, Christmas cards, turn over to me. Football season's over. I'm fresh from training, guaranteed to run from six in the morning until twelve at night without missing once—rust out if I'm still. Make out your lists and hand 'em over."

"We will." Mrs. Gale sighed a sigh of exquisite relief.

"Well and good. I'll buy cards by the gross, mail, tote around. Doreen and Philippa, just turn over to me whatever you want to give Old Nursie, First-Second-Third Cook, Old Nursie's children—"

Philippa already had her list ready, which she pushed over to him with one of her cherished five-dollar bills.

"Now! Here is a synopsis of the four

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acts: First act, decorating house, trimming tree, ceremony of hanging stockings. Will begin at seven-thirty sharp, Christmas Eve. I'll have all the fixings here if everybody else will take an oath that every gift given by the house will be mailed by that time, or otherwise distributed."

Hypnotized into a great enthusiasm, everybody promised in chorus.

"Stage cleared, then, for the second act. That will begin as soon as the first of us wakes up Christmas morning. I imagine that 'll be Pip."

"Gosh! You'd better believe it," said Philippa.

"Philippa, don't say 'Gosh.' I think the grand act of receiving presents needs no boost from me. That act will be just Us, the Gale family, so darned happy at being together and—and everything else—that it's going to be our solemn duty to be foolish. Everybody swear to be foolish?"

"I swear!" Mr. Gale led off in sepulchral tones that the Ghost in "Hamlet" might have copied.

"Third act: Christmas dinner. Now will the Authorities express themselves as to the annual problem, 'The-Person-Who-Needs-

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To-Be-Cheered-Up.' How many of these? The Ones-Who-Need-What-We-Can-Give-Them. The Ones-Who-Have-No-Home-Or-Children?" His eyes were fixed more or less accusingly on his mother.

She laughed outright.

"As Lord of Misrule I am prepared to be fairly indulgent. But also representative, not of one party only, but of all parties. We have suffered in times past—I now speak as representative of the hitherto voiceless majority—we children, from some of those Estimable Ones. I remember having a virulent hatred of one—Auntie Smith—who wasn't an aunt at all. She was a funereal person. She shattered all my happiness in the toy motor boat Santa brought me by telling me how many starving Hindus it would have fed for a month. Of course, we want the Ones-Who-Have-No-Homes. We'd be lonesome without them. But I insist on censorship. And, as censor, I insist on the Ones having, unlike Auntie Smith, a sense of humor. I also think they should, on this special Christmas, be in the minority—preferably not more than two—and male and female at that—and not too old to take an interest in each other."

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"You ridiculous boy." laughed mother. "But really there *is* my Aunt Harriet—that is, I've always called her 'Aunt.' I think she's really some kind of a cousin. She's at the nicest kind of a really-truly Gentlewomen's Home, but it is a Home. And, somehow, she manages to be lots of fun. I think she'd pass the censor. And then there's Mr. Cartwright—"

"You don't mean the rich Mr. Cartwright, do you?"

"In money, yes. But that's not his fault. He has money and a house and a housekeeper. But he lost his wife a year ago and his only son—only child—is across the water. He stopped and talked to me as he was passing the other day, and I *know* he's lonesome. Besides, I want to get a donation from him for the hospital."

"Oh, shameless! But we'll admit him if he has a real sense of humor. Because the place cards are going to be jokes, real jokes on ourselves to act as antidote to too much sweet stuff—not just disguised compliments."

"He'll pass the censor."

"Then for the fourth act I've got something special. It's usually the fourth act that falls down, especially in the Christmas

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play. You've had all your presents and everything has happened that you've been looking forward to. You know just what you've received and what you haven't. And then you slump. So in the evening we'll have the tree. And I've got an idea that I'm going to spring on you that'll be a corrective of the usually inartistic fourth act. And each one of us can have the one he most wants here."

"Anne 'n' Virginia," Philippa hurried to get in.

"But they're two."

"No, they're one, and it's Anne."

"Won by your wit," Bayard said. "As Lord of Misrule I grant your request. Next?"

"Senator Ran—" Mr. Gale had begun, when the others took the word out of his mouth so emphatically that no more formal assent was necessary, any more than Mrs. Gale's suggestion of "Jeff" seemed necessary.

"The D'Aillebouts." Everyone joined in that uproariously.

"Now Doreen?"

But Doreen was not ready.

"La'," Bayard said, with a significant look at her.

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"Jess!" Doreen flashed back at him, with a teasing smile.

"Jess goes." Bayard rose from the table with an imperturbable countenance, so Doreen couldn't tell at all whether her shot had told, or whether her suspicions were correct. "And let's meet at Prior's for lunch. One-thirty, sharp. The lunch is on." He pulled his bill-fold out of his pocket and went through it meditatively.

"The house." Mr. Gale saved the day. They scattered hilariously.

CHAPTER XXXI

BAYARD rapped at Doreen's door at eight o'clock Christmas night. The door opened almost immediately. Doreen stood there, so lovely in her dainty dress that Bayard's usual heartily mechanical indorsement of his sister's appearance was changed to a slow, low:

"Oh, say—I—" as he looked at her.

"I was just going to take these flowers down so everyone could enjoy them." She held a tall jar of the most wonderful roses, so delicately pink, and yet with such splendor in their stately growth, that their fitness to express the girl who held them impressed her brother.

"Wonder if he thought of it," he thought. But his only comment was, "Some taste La' showed, I'll tell the world." The next instant he said, musingly, "By the way, what did La' give you last year?"

"A book. Why?"

"And the Christmas before?"

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"A box of candy, most of which he ate himself." Doreen laughed a little as she said this.

"I see. And this year, flowers," Bayard said, thoughtfully. "Interesting sequence."

"What do you—?" Doreen began, and then stopped in confusion. "Wasn't it lovely I got the gray suède slippers and stockings to match? I suppose mother told you I needed the stockings," she went on, hurriedly. "Oh, Bayard, did you *ever* see such a Christmas?" She put the flowers down to touch caressingly some of the things that made, to the boy's bewildered eyes, a confused mass of delicate colors and lustrous fabrics and lacy stuff all over her bed. "I've had *single* lovely things before, but never all the things to go with it, all at one time. *And* this perfectly fresh and new dancing dress, this *darling* evening cloak ready for the first of the dances to-morrow night. And now I've got every single different kind of shoes and slippers to go with everything I have. I really think shoes and stockings are about the most difficult things of all. And then, my suit and hat are almost new, and this dress. And gloves, as many as I need. It seems almost too good to be

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true. I wonder if I'm horrid and selfish, but, oh, I *do* love pretty things so!"

There was something almost pathetic in the gesture with which she passed her hand over the silvery blue folds of the cloak. Bayard watched her with a new gentleness in his face, and a new shyness. But he said,

"You just wait until you see *my* artistic taste let loose on my own evening clothes. And the Tux, too. Do stand still a minute and let me look at you."

She stood still a moment, her arms gracefully outstretched, and then began to turn daintily around and around like an accomplished mannequin.

"Is that evening dress?" he demanded.

"Informal evening or formal afternoon," she said, happily. "Just exactly right for this evening."

"It's gray—and yet it isn't gray. What gives it just that color?"

"First time I ever knew you were interested in girls' dresses."

"I'm interested in that one—moderately."

"Well, it's a lovely tone of light-gray georgette over very faint pink—'flesh' it's called. But it's the floating drapery that makes it, and that little gleam of silver.

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That was muzz's idea. She has the dandiest taste. I'll bet she had pretty things when she was a girl."

"M-m-m-m-m-m!" Bayard said, considering the bright, bright eyes, the fair, softly waved hair that seemed so alive to-night that light seemed to fairly live in little pools of sun-shot golden brown. And the exquisite pride of the uplifted head, the tender beauty of the mouth. And the deep, lovely color in her cheeks. When had his pretty sister ever been so pretty before? No, "beautiful" was the word. And why? Could it be La'?

"*You're* all right," he said, a little gruffly. And he bolted suddenly from the room.

CHAPTER XXXI

DOWNSTAIRS the Lord of Misrule shook off his sentimental mood and looked piercingly around. It had been his decree that all of the disorder of tissue paper and ribbons and Christmas cards and seals should be removed. He had not only issued the decree, but, knowing that Mollie had a right to a bit of jollification of her own and a Christmas party at her sister's home, he had executed his own orders. So, with the exception of the big tree, a bit of tinsel gleaming here and there but otherwise in partial eclipse until the current should be turned on, and the graceful fringes of evergreen vines, looped up here and there about the walls with gorgeous red poinsettias, the living room showed quite its usual harmonious, orderly comfort.

He took something out of his pocket, wrapped it in a square of silver paper, pinched it into the shape he desired, and wired it on the topmost branch of the tree.

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Then he threw another log on the fire, for the setting of the sun had intensified the cold, and threw himself down on the davenport for a minute's rest. Even though Mr. Cartwright had taken home their other dinner guest and so freed Bayard, the boy had been in violent action every minute of the waking hours of four long days. And even Bayard's splendid frame was achey-tired. But he smiled confidentially into the fire as he reverted to the blissful relief he had felt when he knew that he wouldn't have to escort Aunt Harriet home.

"Gee! I'll bet the other old ladies have heard a lot by this time about the gallant Mr. Cartwright," he thought. "She certainly did brighten up when he gave her his arm to take her in to dinner! Mighty decent of Mr. Randolph and Jeff to gather up the girls. Don't believe I've got pep enough just now to really enjoy going even for Jess. Got to get a little rest to make the fourth act go off all right."

He must have dropped off into a tiny nap, for when the bell rang it shocked him to his feet with a violent start.

It was La'. Bayard felt a little constrained about meeting him. Those flowers, now,

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were going it a little too strong. La' was of the best brand of pals. But when it came to your sister— However, the minute he saw La's gorgeous head of irrepressible red curls and saw the familiar grin that adorned his features, all was forgotten. An uppercut that landed somewhere in the region of the smartly tapering waist of La's new spike-tail coat was the signal for a friendly scrimmage which was wonderfully revivifying. It ended when Bayard drew his friend up under the brightest light in the room and said:

“You needn't think you are the only pebble that has got itself incased in gorgeous togs, even if I—more worthy—am at present attired in dad's refitted hand-me-downs. Here's mine.” He brandished a check before La's eyes. “Look here! Is it the honest-to-goodness truth that they have to be pinched in like that at the waist? I'm afraid I'll look as if I wore corsets. My shoulders are about double my waist.” And the seriousness with which the two friends settled down to talk about all the latest ideas in black broadcloth consorted ill with their public utterances on the score of the undue attention paid to mere clothes by the modern female.

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They were interrupted by the arrival of the D'Aillebouts, Madame tall and gracious and lovely in white so as not to mar the festivities by the evidence of mourning; M. le Colonel in an especially decorative uniform; Jean with a parcel tied up in white tissue paper with red and green ribbon and plastered all over with Christmas seals, according to the fashion he had acquired from the fourth grade of the Clifton Park school.

"It is the gift of Noël to Mees Phileeppa," explained his proud father. "He has in the American manner earned the money for it himself. Brigitte she say that the clothes he have destroy in carrying the coal into the cellar are of more worth. But that makes nothing if he learn the American—what you call heem—'push'?"

At this point Doreen descended, and that ended coherent conversation on the part of La', so Bayard withdrew grumbingly. But the Randolphs were at the door with the three girls. Philippa was detached from the adoration of her shining new bicycle. Mr. and Mrs. Gale appeared. It was soon time for the curtain to roll up on the fourth act.

"Virginia at the piano, please," said Bayard, briskly. And Virginia obeyed with-

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out a word. When the clear, sweet voices of the three friends led off, everyone, after scarcely any pause at all, gathered around the piano and joined in "The shepherds watched their flocks by night." But it was Jess's voice that led them all. La' had a fair tenor voice; the older men, after a moment's hesitation, yielded to the familiar melody; Bayard rumbled in the bass. Mrs. Gale remembered that hers had usually been the responsibility for the contralto. It was astonishing how full and sweet the impromptu chorus was.

When the last note of the last verse of the last carol anyone could recall had died away and they were seated again, Bayard surveyed the little group that watched him expectantly, drawn up in a semicircle about him. His eyes rested on mother and father looking like a pair of particularly gay contemporaries of his own, La' somewhat self-consciously but firmly intrenched by Doreen's side, the D'Aillebouts in the middle, Mr. Randolph and Jeff pleasantly at home on Mr. Gale's left—Jeff exultant because his leg was out of the cast—Jess's mischievous black eyes sparkling above her Christmasy red dress, Anne at the extreme right—for Virginia had

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crept close to Philippa. Philippa had a determined grip of mother's hand.

"Before we light our tree our friends and neighbors, Monsieur and Madame d'Aillebout are so good as to offer us something from their own land." Bayard spoke with a boyish diffidence that was very attractive.

Madame d'Aillebout rose and moved forward in front of the tree. Over her white dress she had thrown a long scarf, heavily embroidered in a magnificent Eastern design. Her oval face was a clear white; her black hair very simply dressed; her eyes were wide with a mystic wonder. She looked appealingly at her husband.

"My wife, she wish that I explain that she will give to you a vair' quaint song of the fourteenth century of our country in which is told the story of the birth of that One for whom we make the Noël, and also the part that the good St. Nicholas he perform."

Instantly Madame d'Aillebout drew the scarf closely about her, shrouding her body. And, with the motion, she became a woman weary almost to the point of fainting, stumbling forward in the phantom hope of finding rest and shelter. The song began, a simple monotonous little tune, plaintive, and with a

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childishly recurring rhythm. Although few of the company knew her language intimately, everyone of them understood the little drama. Mary and Joseph arrived, exhausted with the journey, at crowded Bethlehem. The husband went from one hostelry to another to plead that his wife might be taken in. He is driven from each door. They will not listen to him when he tells them he is afraid his wife will die. The wife is exhausted, despairing. They find at last a stable which the humble owner allows them to enter. The Child is born. The Wise Men come to worship the Babe. In the last verse St. Nicholas comes to adore and in his homage the age-long Church is born.

In each of these episodes Madame d'Aillebout, with an apparently slight change of her voice, of her face—or rather in the expression of her wide, fringed eyes—with an apparently artless rearrangement of the scarf, incarnated the person who spoke, or lived the tender drama. At the last, the rich embroideries falling straight from neck to hem like a stole, she somehow conveyed a sense of majesty as well as the embracing love of the Christian Church incarnate in the hearts of men. It was a simple but a marvelously

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vivid recreation of the faith out of which grew the home festival they were celebrating.

After she had gone to her seat again, an almost awestruck silence fell for a moment on the little assemblage. Then they eagerly hastened to thank Madame for what was really a piece of exquisite art. M. d'Aillebout said, openly wiping his eyes:

"My wife, she is *vair' devote*—what you call heem?—religious." Then with the utmost gayety he proceeded to present to all "*les dames*"—including Philippa, a little wooden sabot filled with bonbons—"pour *les bons enfants*"—since that was what St. Nicholas always left when the dawn of Noël broke.

Bayard switched on the electric current. In an instant the great, dim tree flashed into silvery radiance where everything that shone had flecks of color in it and every bit of color sparkled like a gem. In the long "ah-h-h-h!" that went up there were the deeper tones of the men as well as the softer women voices and the children's still childish treble. All were children in that moment—that precious amulet of a moment, passed from generation to generation, incrustated with the precious stones of human love. Then Bayard cleared

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his throat. The engaging boy vanished for the moment to make place for the man.

"There isn't a gift on the tree. I think that's why we all feel as we do, as if it were a sort of a prayer. Or a visible thank-offering. Perhaps, without really knowing it, I wanted it to be that. There *is* something in symbol, even if to-day common sense makes us turn on the electric current instead of burning candles. But, if there are no presents on it, there *are* wishes made by the three of us—I didn't include mother and father. For if their wishes could be put there all of us know they would just be for us children. And that would just sort of break us all up."

"I put mine there, all the same. You didn't suppose you were going to leave me out. I found out what you were up to!" broke in Mrs. Gale's voice with a ripple of laughter in it.

They were all glad to laugh.

"All right, muzz. I suppose it is that big fellow up there. I'm afraid it's a boomerang for some one. But I made Doreen and Pip write out the great big wish of each one, not the kind we all said to ourselves when we saw the tree, but a foolish wish, a child's

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wish—the next toy we want, just so they could end the day as we began it, with a hope unrealized. I put mine on, too. There they are. See! One in front there—another on the back limb by the wall—the other almost at the top there. There they are visible. For I wrapped them up in silver paper, made buds of them—the tree's budded with wishes. Oh no, it wasn't my idea. I'm not clever enough for that. I snatched it from Eleanor Hallowell Abbott's story last year. There they are, three big buds, with mother's illegal one. And there's something for father, too, that somebody else budded for him. So here we go."

He picked off the nearest silver bud, undid it, unrolled the paper, read:

"'A seven-passenger touring car, with a seat for each Gale, one for Mollie, and two friends beside.' Gee! That's a large order on Santa. All the more jolly to have it to hope for. And this is mine. I'm afraid you'll think Doreen's is modest beside mine. 'A motor boat big enough for all but open-sea service, with a cabin and bunks for us all, and an engine I can tinker on.' And here's our youngest. I'm sure she wants the earth."

"No, the sea!" broke in Philippa's clear

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voice most unexpectedly, and with a note of homesick longing in it that was felt by everyone.

"With a little of the earth thrown in, I take it. For what she says is, 'A house at the Cove that's big enough to have us in it and friends all the time.' Well"—and here his contagious laugh set them all off—"nobody can go to bed feeling satisfied with what he has, with all that to long for. But don't be oppressed"—this to father and mother in front of him—"we'll live just as happily as though all those toys could be hung in next year's stockings."

"Maybe your mother and I can arrange a midsummer Christmas at the Cove and a Santa who'll defy the Union by working overtime."

"Daddy, you don't *mean* it!" It was Philippa's ecstatic voice.

"Well—maybe. The bill carries an appropriation with it. It might be—"

"Perhaps your father and I have a wish sometimes that's suitable for a good big Christmas stocking," Mrs. Gale laughed.

"A *car*—and go on a tour—all the places we've never been able to get to before."

"Perhaps if you know in time we can have

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the Trenholm's cottage and get the sweet-peas set out. Say, Anne and Virginia, you can come."

"If you want them, dad, I've got catalogues from about a dozen companies. La' and I could easily run it."

"And Jeff and Mr. Randolph and the D'Aillebouts and everybody can visit us all the time 'n' everything." Philippa was hugging herself.

"And nobody cares that it's only 'perhaps,'" said Mrs. Gale, gayly. "We're such accomplished castle builders that we rather hate to be hampered by having the plans and specifications. But I do think you're neglecting my wish."

"Beg pardon, muzz." Bayard reached for the wish his mother had budded. They all waited in a rather serious silence. Bayard read, "I wish that Philippa would stop saying, 'Gosh.'"

A shout went up. Philippa looked startled.

"Of course I won't, mother. I didn't know you really cared."

"'Cared'!" commented Doreen. "When every other sentence of the family for the last six months has been, 'Please don't say—'"

"Now for the last wish. It's a particu-

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larly large fat one breathed for father by some one whom he never saw."

"Say! This is the real thing!" said Mr. Gale, boyishly, actually sitting up straight in his excitement.

"I think you'd like to read it yourself, dad," Bayard said, grinning. This came an hour or so ago, but I thought you wouldn't mind if I saved it. Read it out loud, now. No welching."

"Well of all the—! So Zeb Smith has heard."

"But the wish! *Read it!*" This from everyone.

Mr. Gale read:

"Glory be! I hope they'll make you President of the United States. You ought to be!"

Then how they laughed. "I'll see to it that the party gets the tip, Gale. Maybe Zeb will run me for second place," Mr. Randolph was trying to say. When he could be heard again Mr. Gale spoke a little huskily:

"I don't know but that it's the best of all. This means that they know—some of them, anyway—thousands of them, perhaps. It's—it's something to know. Some of them are having a real Christmas, knowing that jus-

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tice is done, after all. Those poor, patient fellows!"

Philippa was whispering something to Virginia.

"I can't, Philippa. I know I can't," Virginia was saying.

"But *try*." Philippa pushed her toward the piano.

Gentle Virginia seated herself. Her hands felt for the keys, fumbling about among vague, sweet harmonies. She played a few notes of a joyous melody—lost it—

"I can't. Nobody could put all this into music. That is, unless it was somebody great. All I can do is to just find sounds. I can't relate one to the other, or tell the reason, or tell what'll happen. Perhaps some day. No. It's no use. So—"

Her hands fell into the spellbound chords of one who *was* great. They all listened while "Holy Night" stilled the childlike joy in their hearts to sure, soft, considered harmony. As the last chord still lingered in the air, some impalpable ghost of a sound took Bayard to the window back of him.

"Oh!" He pulled aside the draperies so they all could see. The snow must have been falling for some time, for the hillside

PHILIPPA'S FORTUNE

was covered with a soft white blanket. And trees, like their own tree, stretched fleece-covered arms out into the moon's white radiance.

"To-morrow we make up a coasting party *magnifique, n'est ce pas?*" M. d'Aillebout had said when Philippa burst out, explosively:

"Gosh!"

They all began to laugh, when something in the solemn rapture of her face silenced them.

"Show to-night and coasting to-morrow, 'n' my bicycle, 'n' Anne 'n' Virginia 'n' everybody here, 'n' the Cove next summer, 'n' everything. It's—it's almost—" She hid her face on her mother's shoulder. She was horribly afraid the tears were coming.

"Perhaps you'll believe another time when I tell you you're going to have a fortune." Anne's important voice broke the silence.

"There is then to be a fortune for Mees Phileppa?" asked M. d'Aillebout.

Anne explained.

"The fortune for Mees Phileppa ees find eetself here and here."

He tapped lightly Philippa's forehead and then where, under the pretty blue dress, throbbed her heart.

THE END

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