BURNHAM CLARA LOUISE

THE KEY NOTE

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CHAPTER I
THE RAPSCALLION

The sea glittered in all directions. The grassy field, humpy with knolls and lumpy with gray rock, sloped down toward the near-by water. Bunches of savin and bay and groups of Christmas trees flourished in the fresh June air, and exhilarating balsamic odors assailed Miss Burridge's nostrils as she stood in the doorway viewing the landscape o'er and reflectively picking her teeth with a pin.

"It's an awful sightly place to fail in, anyway," she thought.

Her one boarder came and stood beside her. She was a young woman with a creamy skin, regular features, dark, dreaming eyes, and a pleasant, slow smile.

"Are you gathering inspiration, Miss Burridge?" she asked, settling a white tam-o'-shanter on her smooth brown locks.

"I hope so, Miss Wilbur. I need it."

"How could any one help it!" was Diana Wilbur's soft exclamation, as she took a deep breath and gazed at the illimitable be-diamonded blue.

Priscilla Burridge turned her middle-aged gaze upon the enthusiasm of the twentieth year beside her.

"Do you know of any inspiration that would make me able to get the carpenter to come and jack up the saggin' corner of that piazza?" she asked. "Or get the plumber to mend the broken pipe in the kitchen?"

Miss Wilbur's dreaming gaze came back to the bony figure in brown calico.

"It seems almost sacrilege, doesn't it," she said in a voice of awe, "to speak of carpenters and plumbers in a place like this? Such odors, such crystal beauty untouched by the desecrating hand of man."

Miss Priscilla snorted. "If I don't get hold of the desecrating hand of man pretty soon, you'll be havin' a stream o' water come down on your bed, the first rain."

The girl's attitude of adoration remained unchanged.

"I noticed that little rift," she said slowly. "As I lay in bed this morning, I looked up at a spot of sapphire that seemed like a day-star full of promise of this transcendent beauty."

Miss Wilbur's pretty lips moved but little when she spoke and her slow utterance gave the effect of a recitation.

Miss Priscilla, for all her harassment, could not forbear a smile.

"I'm certainly glad you're so easily pleased, but you don't know Casco Bay as well as I do, or that day-star would look powerful stormy to you. When it rains here, all other rains are mere

imitations. It comes down from the sky and up from the ground, and the wind blows it east and west, and the porch furniture turns somersets out into the field, and windows and doors go back on you and give up the fight and let the water in everywhere, while the thunder rolls like the day o' judgment."

The ardent light in the depths of the young girl's eyes glowed deeper.

"I should expect a storm here to be inexorably superb!" she declared.

Miss Priscilla heaved a sigh, half dejection, half exasperation, and turned into the house.

"Drat that plumber!" she said. "I've only had a few days of it, but I'm sick of luggin' water in from that well."

"Why, Miss Burridge," said her boarder solicitously, "I haven't fully realized – let me bring in a supply."

"No, no, indeed, Miss Wilbur," exclaimed Miss Priscilla, as she moved through the living-room of the house into the kitchen, closely followed by Diana. "It ain't that I ain't able to do it, but it makes me darned mad when I know there's no need of it."

"But I desire to, Miss Burridge," averred the young girl. "Any form of movement here cannot fail to be one of joy." She seized an empty bucket from the sink and went out the back door.

Small groves of evergreen dotted the incline behind the house, and on the right hand soon became a wood-road of stately fir and spruce, which led to a sun-warmed grassy slope which, like every hill of the lovely isle, led down to the jagged rocks that fringed

its irregular shore.

"My muscular strength is not excessive," panted Diana, struggling up to the back door with her heavy bucket. "I'll fill it only half-full next time."

"You ain't goin' to fill it at all," declared Miss Priscilla emphatically, taking the pail from her. "That'll last me a long time, and when it's gone, I'll get more myself. 'T ain't that it does me a bit of hurt, but it riles me when I know there ain't any need of it."

She set the pail down beside the sink, filled the kettle from it, and set it on the oil stove while Diana sat down on the back doorstep. Then she proceeded:

"One o' the most disagreeable things about this world is that we do seem to need men. They're strong and they don't wear skirts to stumble on, and when they're willin' and clever, they certainly do fill a need; but it does seem as if they were created to disappoint women. They don't know any more about keepin' their promises than they do about the other side o' the moon."

Diana nodded. "It is observable, I think," she said, "that men's natural regard for ethics is inferior to that of women."

Miss Priscilla sniffed. "Now it isn't only the plumber and the carpenter. I came here and saw 'em both over a month ago and explained my needs; explained that I ain't calc'latin' to take in boarders to break their legs on broken piazzas, or drown 'em in their beds. I explained all this when I rented the house, and when I arrived this week I naturally expected to find those things

attended to; and there's Phil Barrison, too. I've known him most of his life. He has relatives here on the island, and when I heard he was comin' to stay with 'em on his vacation, I asked him if he wouldn't be a kind of a handy-man to me and he said he would. He got here before I did, but far as I can make out he's been fishin' ever since. A lot of help he's been. Oh, I knew well enough he was a broken reed. If ever a rapscallion lived, Phil's it. 'Tain't natural for any young one to be so smart as he was. Do you believe in school he found out that by openin' and shuttin' his geography real slow, he could set the teacher to yawnin', and, of course, she'd set the rest of 'em off, and Phil just had a beautiful time. His pranks was always funny ones."

Diana Wilbur gave her slow, rare smile. "What an interesting bit of hypnosis!" she remarked.

"Hey? Well, when that boy got older, he was real ambitious to study. He's got one o' those voices that ought to belong to a cherubim instead of a limb like him, and he wanted lessons. So he got the job of janitor in our church one winter. I got onto him later. When he'd oversleep some awful cold mornin' and arrive too late to get the furnace to workin' right, that rascal would drive the mercury up and loosen the bulb of the thermometer so that when the folks came in and went over to it to see just how cold they *was* goin' to be, they'd see it register over sixty-five and of course they'd take their seats real satisfied."

Miss Wilbur smiled again. "Your friend certainly showed great resource and ingenuity. When those traits are joined to

lofty principle, they should lift him to heights of success. Oh," – the speaker's attitude and voice suddenly changed, and she lifted her finger to impose silence on the cooking utensils which Miss Burridge was dropping into the sink, – "listen!"

Mingled with the roulade of a song sparrow on the roof, came the flute of a human voice sounding and approaching through the field.

> "Thou'rt like unto a flower,
> So pure, so sweet, so fair – "

The one road of the island swept over a height at some distance behind the house and the singer had left it, and was striding down the incline and through the meadow toward Miss Burridge's. The still air brought the song while the singer was still hidden, but at last the girl saw him, and the volume of rich tone increased. At last he came bounding up the slope over which Diana had struggled with her heavy bucket a few minutes before, and then paused at sight of the stranger.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered youth in a dark-blue flannel shirt and nondescript trousers. He was bareheaded, and locks of his thick blond hair were tumbling over his forehead. He looked at Diana with curious, unembarrassed blue eyes, and, lips parted, stopped in the act of speaking.

Miss Burridge came to the door. "Well, at last, Phil," she remarked.

"I only just heard this morning that you had come," he said. "Here's a peace offering." He lifted the two mackerel that were hanging from his hand.

"Beauties," vouchsafed Miss Burridge. "Are they cleaned?"

"Well, if you don't look a gift horse – "

"Well, now, I ain't goin' to clean 'em," said Miss Burridge doggedly. "I've been rubbed the wrong way ever since I landed – "

Philip laughed. "And you won't do it to them, eh? Well, I guess I can rub 'em the wrong way for you – " His unabashed eyes were still regarding Diana as impersonally as though they had both been children of five.

"Excuse me, I am obstructing the passage," said the girl, rising.

"This is Miss Diana Wilbur, Phil. I suppose you're Mr. Barrison now that you have sung in New York."

The young fellow bowed to the girl who acknowledged the greeting.

"What is the name of those beautiful creatures?" she asked with her usual gentle simplicity of manner.

"These? Oh, these are mackerel."

"Jewels of the deep, surely," she said.

"They are rather dressy," returned Philip.

Diana bathed him in the light of her serene brown gaze.

"I am so ignorant of the names of the denizens of the sea," she said. "I come from Philadelphia."

Philip returned her look with dancing stars in his eyes. "I'd have said Boston if you only wore eyeglasses."

"Oh, that *is* the humorous tradition, is it not?" she returned.

"Now, don't you drip 'em in here," said Miss Burridge, as the young fellow started to enter the kitchen door. "If you're really goin' to be clever and clean 'em, I'll give you the knife and everything right outdoors."

"Then I think I would better withdraw," said Diana hastily. "I cannot bear to see the mutilation of such a rich specimen of Nature's handiwork; but, oh, Mr. Barrison, not without one word concerning the heavenly song that floated across the field as you came. Miss Burridge calls you Phil; – 'Philomel with melody!' *I* should say. Au revoir. I will go down among the pebbles for a while."

She vanished, and Philip regarded Miss Burridge, who returned his gaze.

"*Good night!*" he said at last.

"Sh! Sh!" warned Miss Priscilla, and tiptoed across the kitchen. When she had looked from a window and seen her boarder's sweater and tam proceeding among the grassy hummocks toward the sea, she returned, bringing out the materials for Philip's operations on the fish.

"I'll bring a rhetoric instead of finny denizens of the deep, the next time I come," he continued, settling to his job.

Miss Priscilla took her boarder's deserted seat on the doorstep.

"Going to open a young ladies' seminary here, and got the teacher all secured?"

"Nothing of the kind, Phil, and there's only one explanation of her," declared Miss Priscilla impressively. "You've been in art galleries and seen these statues of Venus and Apollo and all that tribe?"

"I have."

"Well, sir, all I can think of is that one o' their Dianas got down off her perch some dark night, and managed to get hold o' some girl clothes, and came here to this island. She *says* she has come to recuperate from unwise vigils caused by vaulting ambition at school. I said it over to myself till I learned it."

"*I* should say her trouble might be indigestion from devouring dictionaries," remarked Philip.

"Well, anyway, she's a sweet girl and it's all as natural as breathing to her. At first I accused her in my own mind of affectation, but, there! she hasn't got an affected bone in her body, and she's willin' and simple as a child. You'd ought to 'a' seen her luggin' water up the hill for me this mornin'. That reminds me. You promised to give me a lift this summer when I needed it."

"At so much a lift," remarked Philip.

"Of course. Well, the first thing I want you to do is to get the carpenter and the plumber and knock their heads together, and then bring 'em here, one in each hand, so's I can have my house ready when the folks come. Why, my new stove ain't even put

up. Mr. Buell, the plumber, promised me faithful he'd come this mornin'. I'm cookin' on an old kerosene stove there was here and managin' to keep Miss Wilbur from sheer starvation."

"Miss Wilbur? Is that the fair Diana? Where did you get the 'old master'? Did she find you waiting when she got off the pedestal?"

"No, I found her waiting. She came to the island on a misunderstandin'. There wasn't any one ready so early in the season to make strangers comfortable, and it seems she took a fancy to this place and I found her here sittin' on the steps when I arrived. She said she had been on the island a week and had walked up to this piazza every pleasant day, and she'd like to live here."

"Did she really say it as plain as that?"

"Well – I don't suppose those were her exact words, but she made me understand that she was willin' to come right in for better or for worse just so's she could have a room up there in front where the dawn – yes, she said something about the dawn, I forget whether it was purple or rosy – "

"Mottled, perhaps," suggested Philip.

"Well, anyway, I told her the dawn came awful early in the day this part o' the year, and that probably she'd be better satisfied in one o' the back rooms; but she was firm on the *dawn*, so she's got it. But I draw the line at her gettin' midnight shower-baths, and that's what she will get if that wretch of a Matt Blake don't get here before the next storm and put on the shingles."

"And I have to tell the plumber that you have to 'haul water' too. Is that it? The well is some little distance. Rather hard on the statue, wasn't it, to do the hauling? She'll wish she'd stayed in the gallery. I'll bring in a lot before I go."

"Don't go, Philip," begged Miss Priscilla. "Supposin' you don't go, not till you can leave me whole-footed. The men'll come sooner and work better if they know there's a man here. Your grandma won't care if her visit's interrupted for a little while. I'll feed you with your own mackerel and you can bet I know how to cook 'em."

"Do you think Matt Blake realizes that I'm a man?" The teeth Philip showed in his smile were an asset for a singer. "He helped teach me to walk, you know."

"Well, now, you teach *him*" retorted Miss Priscilla. "Show him how to walk in this direction. I don't want to make a fizzle of this thing. I found there wa'n't anybody goin' to run the place this summer, so I thought it might be a good job for me. I never took a thought that it was goin' to be so hard to get help. They tell me there ain't any servants any more; and there are enough folks writin' for rooms to fill me up entirely. I can do the *cookin'* myself – "

"Now, Miss Burridge, you aren't leading up to asking me to put on an apron and wait on table, are you? You must remember I'm recuperating also from a too vaulting ambition."

"Recuperatin', nothin'! You're the huskiest-lookin' thing I ever saw. No, I ain't goin' to ask you to wait on table; but I've got an

idea. We're too out o' the way here for me to get college boys. They'd rather go to the mountains and so on – fashionable resorts. But I've got a niece, if she don't feel too big of herself to do that sort of thing; she might come. I'm goin' to ask her anyway. I haven't seen her for years 'cause her mother's been gone a long time and her father went out to Jersey to live, but I've no doubt she's a nice girl. Her name's Veronica. Isn't that a beater? I told my sister I couldn't see why she didn't name her Japonica and be done with it."

"It's the name of a saint," remarked Philip.

"Well, I hope she's enough of one to come and help me out. I'm goin' to ask her."

"Better get Miss Wilbur to write her about the rosy dawn and the jeweled denizens. I'm afraid you'll be too truthful and tell about the leaks. With an 'old master' and a saint, you ought to get on swimmingly."

"Well, will you stay with me a few days?" said Miss Priscilla coaxingly. "If I had a rapscallion to add to the menagerie – "

"Do you mean ménage, Miss Burridge?"

"I'll call it anything in the world you like, if you'll only stand by me, Phil."

"All right." The young fellow tossed the second cleaned fish on to the plate. "Let me wash my hands and I'll go and throw out a line for the plumber."

"You're a good boy," returned Miss Burridge, relieved. "I do think, Philip, that in the main you are a good boy! Who's that

comin' over?" Miss Burridge craned her neck and narrowed her eyes the better to observe a bicycle which appeared across the field.

The apparition of any human being was exciting to one responsible for the comfort of others in this Arcadia, where modern conveniences could only be obtained by effort both spasmodic and continuous.

"Oh, it's Marley Hughes from the post-office."

A youngster of fourteen came wheeling nonchalantly over the bumps of the field, and finally jumped off his machine and came leisurely up the rise among the trees.

"I hoped you might be Matt Blake," said Miss Priscilla. "He's got as far as to have the shingles here."

"Well, I ain't," remarked Marley in the pleasant, drawling, leisurely, island voice.

"What you got for me?" inquired Miss Burridge.

"Telegram." The boy brought the store envelope from his pocket.

"Oh, I hate 'em," said Miss Burridge apprehensively.

Marley held it aggravatingly away from Philip's extended hand. "Take it back if you want me ter," he said with a grin. "It's ten cents anyway, whether you take it or not."

"Oh, yes, I've got the money right here." Miss Priscilla turned to a shelf over the sink and took a dime from a purse which lay there.

"Here." She gave it to Marley, who without more ado jumped

on his wheel and coasted down among the trees and off over the soft grass.

"You open it, Phil. My spectacles ain't here anyway," said Miss Priscilla anxiously.

So Philip tore open the envelope. The look of amazement which overspread his face as the message greeted him caused Miss Burridge to exclaim fearfully: "Speak out, speak out, Phil."

"They must have taken this down wrong at the store," he said. Then he read the scrawled words slowly. "'Look in broiler oven for legs.'"

The cryptic sentence appeared to have a magical effect upon Miss Priscilla. Her face beamed and she threw up her hands in thanksgiving.

"Glory be!" she exclaimed devoutly.

"What am I stumbling on?" said Philip. "Have you taken to wiring in cipher?"

"You *see*" said Miss Priscilla excitedly, reaching for the telegram which Philip yielded, "it *came* without any *legs*. Mr. Buell himself looked it over on the wharf and said he couldn't find 'em anywhere; and, of course, it was a terrible anxiety to me and I wrote to them right off, and I was goin' to get Mr. Buell to set it up without the legs if necessary and stick somethin' else under. Come and help me look, Phil."

Miss Burridge seized the young fellow's arm and dragged him into the kitchen, where in one corner reposed the new stove in its shining newness, its parts piled ignominiously lop-sided. Talking

all the time, its owner pulled open one door after another, as Philip disengaged them, and at last she laid hands on the missing treasure.

"Now I'll give you as good a dinner as ever comes off this stove if you'll go and get those men and bring 'em up here," she said. "Don't leave me till I'm whole-footed, Phil."

"Want feet as well as legs, do you?" he chuckled. "All right. See you later if I can get Blake and Buell. If I can't, I suppose I'd better drown myself."

"No, no, don't do that, Phil. *You're* better than nothing, yourself."

CHAPTER II
VERONICA

For the next few days the right moment for Philip to desert Miss Burridge never seemed to arrive, and by that time the new establishment had come to be in very good running order, which was fortunate, as the expected boarders' dates were drawing near.

Diana approached Philip one morning with a pleased countenance. He was encouraging the hopeful little sweet peas that stood in a green row below the porch. She came and sat on the rail above and watched him.

"Miss Burridge is going to allow me to name our domicile," she announced.

"Brave woman!" said Philip, coaxing the brown earth up against the line of green with his trowel.

"Which of us is brave?" asked Diana, smiling, – "Miss Priscilla or myself?"

"What are you going to call it? Olympus?"

"Why should I?" Diana gave a soft, gurgling laugh.

"I thought perhaps it might bring happy memories and prove a palliation of nostalgia."

"I always have a feeling that you are amusing yourself with me, Mr. Barrison."

"Have you any objection to my seeing that you are a goddess?

What have you done with Apollo, by the way? Couldn't you persuade him to leave the gallery?"

"To what gallery do you refer? I do not particularly care for handsome men," was Miss Wilbur's thoughtful response.

"I'm sorry I'm so beautiful, then," said Philip, extending his little earth barricade.

Diana looked down from her balcony on his tumbling blond hair.

"You have a very good presence for your purpose," she said.

"What is my purpose?"

"The concert stage, is it not? Perhaps even opera, later?"

"Yes, divine huntress, if I ever succeed in making it."

"You will make it unless you are unpardonably dilatory and neglectful. Every time you utter a musical tone it sends a vibration coursing through my nerves with a pleasant thrill."

Philip looked up at the speaker with his sea-blue, curious gaze, which she received serenely.

"Bully for you, Miss Wilbur. That's all I can say. Bully for you."

"I am glad if that encourages you," she said kindly. "It is quite outside my own volition."

"Then I don't need to thank you, eh?"

"Oh, not in the least."

Philip laughed and stooped again to his job.

"Let me see, Apollo – he struck liars and knew how to prescribe for the croup, didn't he, besides being a looker beyond

all comers?"

Diana smiled. "You think of everything in terms of humor, do you not?" she rejoined.

"Perhaps – of most things, but not of you."

"Oh, I think of me most of all."

"Far from it," said Philip. "I wouldn't dare. If my voice gives you a thrill, yours gives me a chill."

"I can't believe that really," said Diana equably, watching Philip's expert handling of the trowel. "You are always laughing at me. I don't in the least understand why, but it doesn't matter at all. I think it is a quite laudable mission to make people laugh. What a good gardener you are, Mr. Barrison."

"Oh, isn't he, though!" exclaimed Miss Priscilla, emerging from the house. "Think of my luck that Phil really likes to fuss with flowers. Ox-chains couldn't drag him to do it if he didn't like to."

"Really?" returned Diana. "Is she not maligning you, Mr. Barrison? Are you really the slave of caprice?"

"I deny it," said Philip. "It doesn't sound nice."

"It would be a dire thing for you," declared the girl. "But you do not ask me what I am naming the Inn."

"Oh, it is an Inn, is it?"

"Yes," put in Miss Priscilla. "Since the leaks are mended, both pipes and roof, and the stove's up and the chimney draws, I think we can call it that."

"What is it, then? 'The Dew Drop'?" inquired Philip.

"I particularly dislike puns," said Diana quietly. "I like 'The Wayside.' Why shouldn't we call it 'The Wayside Inn'?"

"You have my permission," said Philip.

"We do not need anything original, but we do need a name that is lovely. 'The Wayside Inn' is lovely."

"So be it," said Philip.

"And you're not forgettin' what you are goin' to do to-morrow, are you, dear boy?" said Miss Priscilla ingratiatingly.

"Not if it isn't to go again for the plumber," replied Philip. "His wrenches and hammers are too handy; and I'm sure one more call up here would render him dangerous."

"Mr. Buell is a very pleasant man," said Diana. "So is Mr. Blake, the carpenter. I have learned such interesting expressions from them. Mr. Blake was showing me the fault in one of the gables of this house. He said the builder had given the roof a 'too quick yank.' Is not that quaint?"

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Philip up into the girl's serious face. "Bully for Matt. You may get the vernacular, after all."

"I'm not quick," said Diana. "I'm afraid I should not prove an apt pupil."

"But, Philip," said Miss Priscilla, "about to-morrow. You know you'll have to get the early boat to go to meet Veronica. It's perfectly splendid of you to go, dear boy. I don't know how I could spare the time. I've got to get several rooms ready for to-morrow, and the child is such an utter stranger in this part o' the world."

"Oh, yes, I'll go," said Philip carelessly. "I think the Inn will be relieved that I can get a hair-cut. My tresses are nearly ready to braid now."

Diana smiled pensively. "I think you are very amusing, Mr. Barrison," she said.

Philip vaulted up over the railing and took a seat beside her, regarding his earth-stained hands and then her serene countenance, whose gaze was bent upon him. He shook his head to toss the blond forelock out of his eyes.

"So my voice gives you a thrill, eh?"

"Oh, decidedly," was the devout response.

"That's a good thing. I thought perhaps you couldn't really be roused from your dreaminess before the fourth of July, but I have some tones that in that case will be warranted to set you and the echoes going at the same time."

Diana clasped her hands. "Oh, utter them," she begged.

"Can't," laughed Philip, wiping his warm forehead with his shirt-sleeve. "The stage isn't set."

Diana continued to look imploringly ardent. "'Drink to me only with thine eyes,'" she suggested.

"That's the only way they'll let you do it nowadays," responded Philip, kicking the heels of his sneakers gently against the railing.

Miss Burridge looked over her spectacles at Diana in her beseeching attitude, and her eyes widened still further as the girl went on slowly with her brown gaze fixed on Philip's quizzical countenance:

"How can I bear to leave thee!
One parting kiss I give thee – "

"Dear me," thought Miss Priscilla. "I'd never have believed it of her." And it occurred to her for the first time that Philip Barrison was a handsome man.

"Fare*well*," went on Diana, with soft fervor. "'Farewell, my own true love – '"

"Farewell," sang Philip, falling into the trap and finishing the phrase. "'Farewe-ell, my own – true – love.'"

"Oh," breathed Diana, and the way her clasped hands fell upon her heart caused Miss Priscilla much embarrassment.

"I can scarcely wait," said the girl slowly, "to hear you sing a real song with a real accompaniment. There is such rare penetrating richness in the quality of your voice."

Miss Burridge cleared her throat. "I shouldn't wonder if Miss Wilbur was a real help to you, Phil," she said. "Young folks need encouragement."

"And soap-suds," added Philip, regarding his earthy hands and glancing merrily up at Diana, who was still standing in her attitude of adoration; but there was no answering merriment in those brown orbs. Her brain might tell her later that Miss Burridge's patronizing remark had been amusing, but she would be obliged to think it over.

Philip jumped off the railing, whistling, and followed

Miss Priscilla into the house and to the sink, while Diana, reminiscently humming "The Soldier's Farewell," descended the steps and wandered away.

When, the next day in town, Philip stood in the Union Station waiting for Veronica's train, he wondered how he was to know her, but remembering that Miss Burridge spoke of having instructed her to go the first thing to the transfer office about her trunk, he turned his steps thither as the crowds poured off the train. All Boston seemed to have decided to come to Maine for the summer.

Soon he saw her – he felt at once it was she – looking about undecidedly as she came. She was a short, plump girl of seventeen or eighteen, at present bent a little sideways from the weight of the suitcase she was carrying. Philip strode forward and seized the suitcase with one hand while he lifted his hat with the other.

"Here, you let that alone!" said the girl decidedly, her round eyes snapping.

"Isn't this Miss Trueman?"

"Why, yes, it is," she returned, but she still looked suspicious and clung to her suitcase. Nobody need think she wasn't up to all the tricks. "Did my aunt send you to meet me?"

"She certainly did."

"Then you know her name. What's her name?" The upward look was so childlike in its shrewdness that it stirred the spirit of mischief.

"Why – let me see, Lucilla, isn't it?"

"You give me that suitcase this minute." The girl pulled on the handle with a muscular little hand.

"Why, Veronica," Philip's smile became a laugh. "Santa Veronica, what a very unsaintlike voice and expression you're using."

She laughed, too, then, and relinquished her burden. "You do know me. Who are you?"

"Miss Burridge's man-of-all-work. Name, Philip Barrison."

"So she gave you such a job as this. How did you pick me out?"

"That wild look around for the transfer office." They were now moving toward it.

"It wasn't wild. I didn't need you at all. Aunt Priscilla needn't have bothered. I have a tongue in my head and money in my pocket, and Puppa said that's all anybody needs if she has any brains."

"But I have to do what my employer orders, you see," replied Philip.

Veronica looked him over. Fresh from the barber and in correct summer garb, he was an extremely good-looking object.

"Oh, yes, it isn't your fault," she returned generously, "but is it a swell place Aunt Priscilla's got?" She looked him over again while he stopped at the transfer window and checked her trunk.

"The Wayside Inn," replied Philip with dignity.

"Well, I've come to help her," said the girl. "But I've never done any serving. I haven't any uniform or anything like that."

"It isn't necessary. Look at me. I don't look like a footman – or a butler – or anything like that, do I?"

"No," said Veronica, her round eyes very serious. "You look like a – like a common – gentleman."

"Thank you, Miss Trueman. I'll try to deserve your praise."

Philip took her and her suitcase across town in a cab, and aboard the little steamer, and found the best spot he could for them to sit.

"Puppa says this bay is noted for its picturesqueness," said Veronica, when they were settled.

"Quite right," returned Philip, putting in her lap one of the magazines he had bought on the wharf.

"No, thank you," she returned. "I shan't read. I'm going to look. Puppa'll expect me to tell him all about it. He was delighted at my having a chance to come to the seashore. He thought it would do my health so much good."

Philip regarded her round cheeks, round eyes, and round, rosy mouth.

"Your health? You look to me as though if you felt any better you'd have to call the doctor."

"Yes, I'm not really ailing – but I freckle. Isn't it a shame?" She put one hand to her nose which had an upward tilt.

"Oh, that's all right," laughed Philip. "Call 'em beauty spots."

She sat, pensively continuing to cover her nose with her silk-gloved hand.

"Perhaps you're hungry. I ought to have bought you some

chocolates," said Philip. "Perhaps there's time still." He looked at his watch.

Veronica smiled. It was a pleasant operation to view and disclosed a dimple. "Did Aunt Priscilla give you money to buy me candy? Don't bother. I have some gum. Would you like some?" As she spoke, she opened her handbag.

Philip bent a dreadful frown upon her. "Do you chew gum?" he asked severely.

"Yes, sometimes, of course. Everybody does."

"Then you deserve to freckle. You deserve all the awful things that can befall a girl."

"Well, for a hired man," said Veronica, her hand pausing in its exploration, "you have the most nerve of any one I ever saw."

She seemed quite heated by this condemnation, and instead of the gum drew out a vanity box and, looking in the mirror, powdered her nose deliberately.

Philip opened his magazine. The whistle blew and the boat began to back out of the slip. Veronica regarded her companion from time to time out of the tail of her eye, and at a moment when his manner indicated absorption in what he was reading, she replaced the vanity case in her bag and when her hand reappeared, it conveyed something to her mouth.

"I wouldn't," said Philip, without looking up. She colored hotly.

"Nobody asked you to," she retorted.

Then all was silence while the steamer, getting its direction,

began moving toward the islands that dotted the bay.

The girl suddenly started.

"If there aren't those people!" she ejaculated.

"What people?" asked Philip.

"They came on in the same car with me from Boston. See that dark man over there with a young boy? I couldn't help noticing them on the train. You see how stupid the boy looks. He seemed so helpless, and the man just ignored him when he asked questions, and treated him so mean. I just hate that man."

Philip regarded the couple. They presented a contrast. The man was heavily built with a sallow, dark face, his restless eyes and body continually moving with what seemed an habitual impatience. The boy, perhaps fourteen years of age, had a vacant look, his lips were parted, and his position, slumped down in a camp-chair, indicated a total lack of interest in his surroundings.

"Tell me about Aunt Priscilla," said Veronica suddenly. "I haven't seen her since I was twelve years old. My mother died then. She was Aunt Priscilla's sister and Aunt Pris was willing to take me if Pa wanted her to, but he didn't and we moved away, and I've never seen her since. Of course, she writes sometimes and so do I. Has she many boarders?"

"Only one so far, but then she's a goddess. You've read your mythology, haven't you? This is the goddess Diana."

"Say, you're awfully fresh, do you know that?" remarked Veronica. "You treat me all the time as if I was a baby. I've graduated from high school and very likely I know just as much

as you do."

"I shouldn't doubt that," returned Philip. "On the level, you'll see when you get to the Inn that I'm telling the truth. Diana is passing for the present under the title of Miss Wilbur."

"One boarder!" exclaimed Veronica with troubled brow. "Why, Aunt Priscilla doesn't need two helpers like you and me."

"Oh, there are plenty more boarders coming," said Philip. "This boat may be full of them for all we know. She is expecting people to-night. Let's look around and decide who we'll take up there with us."

"I'll tell you one person I'd choose first of all. See that woman with her back to us with a blue motor veil around her shoulders? I noticed her just when I was pointing out that devil and the boy to you."

"You use strong language, Miss Trueman. Couldn't you spare my feelings and call our dark friend Mephisto?"

"Sounds too good for him. I'd like to use me-fist-o on him, I know that." Veronica giggled, and went on: "Do you see her?"

"I do. My vision is excellent."

"Well, she was on the train, too, and once I saw her smile at that poor shy boy and show him how to get a drink of water. We were all in a day car. Chair car crowded. You can't see her face, but she's the sweetest thing." Then with a change of voice: "Oh, wouldn't it jar you! There's fuss-tail. See that dame with the white flower in her hat, looking over the rail? I suppose she's watching to see if the fishes behave themselves. She was on the

train, too, and nothing suited her from Boston to Portland. She was too hot, or she felt a draught, or she didn't like the fruit the train-boy brought, or something else was wrong, every minute."

"We won't take her, then," said Philip.

"I should say not. She'd sour the milk. What's the island like?"

"Diana says it resembles Arcadia strikingly, and she ought to know."

"But I never was in Arcadia," objected Veronica.

"Well, it is just a green hill popping right up out of the Atlantic, with plenty of New England rocks in the fields, and drifts of daisies and wild roses for decoration, and huge rocky teeth around the shore that grind the waves into spray and spit it up flying toward the sky."

"What kind of folks? Just folks that come in summer?"

"Not at all. Old families. New England's aristocracy. These islands are the only place where there are no aliens, just the simon-pure descendants of Plymouth Rock. As I say aristocrats. I was born there."

"You were?" returned Veronica curiously.

"I were."

"Well, I was born in Maine, in Bangor. I guess that's just about as good."

"No, it's not as good," said Philip gravely. "Nevertheless, I forgive you."

"Tell me more about the island."

"Well, it has one road."

"Only one street?"

"No, no street. Just one road which has its source in a green field on the south and loses itself in the beach on the north after it has passed the by-path that leads to the haunted farm."

"Oh, go away!" scoffed Veronica.

"I can't. The walking won't be good for another hour."

"Who lives at the farm?"

"The ha'nts."

"Nobody else?"

"No, it isn't likely. It's at the head of Brook Cove where the pirates used to come in at a day when it was laughable to think that passenger boats would ever touch at this island."

Veronica's eyes grew rounder than before.

"Do you suppose there's gold packed in around there if people could only find it?"

"I don't, but a great many people thought there might be. It is much more fun to hunt for pirate gold than to go fishing in squally weather, and it has been hunted for, faithfully."

"And not any found?" said Veronica sympathetically.

"That's the mournful fact."

"But who were the farmers, and why did they stop farming? Was it the ghosts?"

"No, I think it was the rocks. It was found more profitable to farm the sea. You know abandoned farms are fashionable in New England, anyway, so the ghosts have a rather swell residence at the old Dexter place. I spent the first eight years of my life on

the island. Then it was an undiscovered Arcadia. Now – why, you will go up to The Wayside Inn in a motor – that is, if I can get hold of Bill Lindsay before somebody else grabs him. Lots of people know a good thing when they see it, and lots of people have seen the island."

The wharf was full of people to welcome the little steamer as it drew in, and there was a grand rush of passengers for the coveted motor. It seemed to Veronica that she heard her aunt's name on many lips, and Philip found himself feeling responsible for the trunk checks of everybody who was seeking Miss Burridge.

The upshot of it all was, by the time he had safeguarded the baggage of the arrivals and sent them on their way, he and Veronica were left to climb the road and pursue the walk toward home.

"Didn't that old hawk-nose say he was going to Aunt Priscilla's?"

"It's a very good-looking nose," remarked Philip. "But so far as I could see, all your friends of the train were bound for the same place."

"He'll be lucky," said Veronica viciously, "if I don't put Paris green in his tea. Oh, what a beautiful view of the sea!" she exclaimed as they reached the summit of the hill.

They had not walked far when Bill Lindsay's Ford came whirring back over the much-traveled road, and he turned around for them.

"After all," said Philip, as the machine started back up the

island, "your lady of the blue veil should set off the affliction of Mephisto's presence."

"Did she come?" asked Veronica delightedly.

"Yes, didn't you see me pack her in with the woman whose halo won't fit? The dull boy sat between them."

"Well," said Veronica, "then there's no great loss without some small gain."

When the motor reached the Inn, Miss Priscilla was pleased with the way Veronica dropped her hat and jacket in the kitchen, and after drinking the one cup of cocoa upon which her aunt insisted, was ready to help her carry in the late supper for the new guests with whom Philip sat down at table. Veronica, coming and going, tried to make out his status in the house.

"That Mr. Barrison you sent to meet me," she said to her aunt when the meal was over, "told me he was your man-of-all-work. He don't act much like it."

"Law, child," Miss Priscilla laughed. "He has been lately. Phil's a dear boy when he isn't a wretch, and he's helped me out ever since I came. I won't ever forget how good he's been. Now, let's sit down and let me see you eat this fresh omelette and tell me all about yourself. I see you're just like your mother, handy and capable, and let me tell you, it takes a big load off me, Veronica."

Just as she finished speaking, Diana Wilbur came in from the twilight stroll she had been taking.

"Miss Wilbur, this is my little niece, Veronica Trueman," said Miss Priscilla. "She has come to help me, and high time, too.

Four people came to-night and there will be more to-morrow."

Diana approached the newcomer and looked down upon her kindly after taking her offered hand.

"You must have had an inspiring ride down the bay, Miss Veronica," she said. "I have been taking a walk to see the sun set. It was heavenly to-night. Such translucent rose-color, and violet that shimmered into turquoise, and robin's-egg blue. How fortunate for the new people to get that first impression! Well, Miss Burridge," Diana sighed. "Of course we must be glad to see them, but it has been a very subtle joy to retire and to waken with no human sounds about us. I shall always remember this last two weeks."

"I'm glad you feel that way," said Miss Priscilla. "I thought, though, that you'd heard lots o' sounds. Phil makes enough noise for a regiment when he is dressin' in the mornin'."

"You can scarcely call such melodious tones noise, can you?" replied Miss Wilbur gently. "His flute is more liquid than that of the hermit thrush."

"I never heard him play the flute." Miss Priscilla looked surprised.

"I refer to the marvelous, God-bestowed instrument that dwells within him," explained Diana.

"I think myself," said Miss Priscilla, clearing her throat, "that it's kind o' cozy to hear a man whistlin' and shoutin' around in the mornin' while he's dressin'. I suppose he'll be leavin' us pretty soon now. I hate to see him go, he's gettin' the plants into

such good shape; and wasn't he good about scythin' paths so we wouldn't get wet to our knees every time we left the house? I don't know how you ever had the courage to wade over to this piazza before I came, Miss Wilbur."

"Mr. Barrison certainly did smooth our paths."

"He told me he was Aunt Priscilla's man-of-all-work," said Veronica, busy with her omelette.

"So he has been," replied Diana seriously: "out of the goodness of his heart and the cleverness of his hands; but he is a great artist, Miss Veronica, or at least he will be."

"Do you mean he paints?"

"No, he sings: and it is singing – such as must have sounded when the stars sang together."

"Dear me," said Veronica, "I wish I'd asked him to pipe up when we were on the boat."

Diana let her gaze rest for a moment of silence on the sacrilegious speaker, then she excused herself, saying she would go up to her room.

As soon as the door had closed behind her, Veronica looked up and bestowed upon her aunt a meaning wink.

"She's got it bad, hasn't she?" she said.

Miss Burridge put her finger to her lips warningly. "Sh!" she breathed. "Sometimes I think she has: but, law, Phil's nothing but a boy."

"And she's nothing but a girl," said Veronica practically. "That's the way it usually begins."

Miss Burridge laughed. "What do you know about it, you child?"

"Not so much as I'd like to. Puppa would never let anybody stay after ten o'clock, and you don't really get warmed up before ten o'clock."

"Why, Veronica Trueman, how you talk!"

"Don't speak of how I talk!" said Veronica. "Hasn't that Miss Wilbur got language! I guess Mr. Barrison likes her, too. He told me she was a goddess."

"Oh, Phil's just full of fun. He always will be a rapscallion at heart, no matter how great he ever gets to be."

"Well, he doesn't want anybody else to stop saying prunes and prisms. He didn't even want me to chew gum. Anybody that's as unnatural as that had better marry a goddess. Now, let's go for those dishes, Aunt Priscilla."

"You good child!" said Miss Burridge appreciatively. "I can't really ask Genevieve to stay in the evenin'. She's the little girl who comes every day and prepares vegetables and washes dishes. Now, one minute, Veronica, while I get the names o' these new people straight. I've got their letters here." Miss Priscilla took them down from the chimney-piece. "There's Mrs. Lowell, *she*'s alone, and Miss Emerson, *she*'s alone, and Mr. Nicholas Gayne and his nephew, Herbert Gayne. I wonder how long I'll remember that."

"I know them all," said Veronica sententiously. "The whole bunch came on in the same car with me from Boston. It's my

plan to poison Mr. Gayne."

"Don't talk that way, child."

"You'll agree to it when you see how mean he is to his nephew. The boy isn't all there."

"What do you mean?"

"Has rooms to let in the upper story, you know." Veronica touched her round forehead. "Mrs. Lowell is a queen and Miss Emerson isn't; or else Miss Emerson is a queen and Mrs. Lowell isn't. I'll know which is t'other to-morrow."

"You seem to have made up your mind about them all."

"Oh, yes!" said Veronica. "You don't have to eat a whole jar of butter to find out whether it's good. All I need is a three-minute taste of anybody, and I had three hours and a half of them. Now, come on, Aunt Priscilla, let's put some transparent water in the metal bowl, and the snowy foam of soap within it." She rolled up her naughty eyes as she spoke.

Miss Burridge gave the girl a rebuking look, and then laughed. "Don't you go to makin' fun of her now," she said. "She's my star boarder, no matter who else comes, I'm in love with her whether Phil is or not. She's genuine, that girl is, – genuine."

"And you don't want me to be imitation," giggled Veronica. "I see."

Then the two went at the clearing-up and dish-washing in high good-humor.

CHAPTER III
A FRIENDLY PACT

"You, Veronica," said Miss Burridge one morning, looking out of the kitchen window. "I feel sorry for that young boy."

"I told you you would. Old Nick should worry what his nephew does with himself all day."

"Veronica!" Miss Priscilla gave the girl a warning wink and motioned with her hand toward the sink where Genevieve, her hair in a tight braid and her slender figure attired in a scanty calico frock, was looking over the bib of an apron much too large for her, and washing the breakfast dishes.

"Excuse me," said Veronica demurely. "I meant to say Mr. Gayne. Genevieve, you must never call Mr. Gayne 'Old Nick.' Do you hear?"

"Veronica!" pleaded Miss Burridge.

"Oh, we all know Mr. Gayne," said Genevieve, in her piercing, high voice which always seemed designed to be heard through the tumult of a storm at sea.

"He has been here before, then?" asked Miss Burridge.

"Pretty near all last summer. He comes to paint, you know."

"No, I didn't know he was an artist."

"Oh, yes, he paints somethin' grand, but I never saw any of his pitchers."

"Was his nephew with him last summer?"

"No, I don't believe so. I never saw anybody around with him. He spent most of his time up to the Dexter farm. He said he could paint the prettiest pitchers there. It was him seen the first ghost."

"What are you talking about, Genevieve?" asked Miss Burridge, while Veronica busied herself drying the glass and silver.

"Oh, yes," she put in. "That is the haunted farm. Mr. Barrison was telling me about it."

"Yep," said Genevieve. "Folks had said so a long time and heard awful queer noises up there, but Mr. Gayne was the first who really seen the spook."

"I'm not surprised that he had a visitor," said Veronica. "Dollars to doughnuts, it had horns and hoofs and a tail."

"That's what Uncle Zip said," remarked Genevieve. "He said 't wa'n't anything but an old stray white cow."

Veronica laughed, and her aunt met her mischievous look with an impressive shake of the head. "Mind me, now," she said, and Veronica did not pursue the subject.

The long porch across the front of the Inn made, sometimes a sunny, and sometimes a foggy, meeting-place for the members of the family. It boasted a hammock and some weather-beaten chairs, and Miss Myrna Emerson was not tardy in discovering the one of these which offered the most comfort. She was a lady of uncertain age and certain ideas. One of the latter was that it was imperative that she should be comfortable.

"I should think Miss Burridge would have some decent chairs here," she said one morning, dilating her thin nostrils with displeasure as she took possession of the most hopeful of the seats.

The remark was addressed to Diana who was perched on the piazza rail.

"Doubtless they will be added," she said, "should Miss Burridge find that her undertaking proves sufficiently remunerative."

"She charges enough, so far as that goes," declared Miss Emerson curtly, but finding the chair unexpectedly comfortable, she settled back and complained no further.

Philip was out on the grass painting on a long board the words "Ye Wayside Inn." Herbert Gayne stood watching him listlessly. His uncle was stretched in the hammock. Mrs. Lowell came out upon the porch. Mr. Gayne moved reluctantly, but he did arise. Men usually did exert themselves at the advent of this tall, slender lady with the radiant smile and laughing eyes.

"Perhaps you would like the hammock, Mrs. Lowell," he said perfunctorily.

"Offer it to me some time later in the day," she responded pleasantly, and he tumbled back into the couch with obvious relief.

Mrs. Lowell approached the rail and observed Philip's labors.

"Where are you going to hang that sign?" she asked in her charming voice. "Across the front of the house, I judge."

"Oh, no," replied Philip. "We can't hope to attract the fish. I am going to hang it at the back where Bill Lindsay's flivver will feel the lure before it gets here."

"Across the back of the house," cried Miss Emerson in alarm. "I hope nowhere near my window."

"The sign will depend from iron rings," explained Diana.

"I know they'll squeak," said Miss Emerson positively; "and if they do, Mr. Barrison, you'll simply have to take it down."

No one replied to this warning. So Miss Emerson dilated her nostrils again with an air of determination and leaned back in her chair.

The eyes of both Mrs. Lowell and Diana were upon the young boy whose watching face betrayed no inspiration from the fresh morning. He had an ungainly, neglected appearance from his rough hair to his worn shoes. His clothes were partially outgrown and shabby.

"Bert," called his uncle from the hammock. The boy looked up. "Come here. Don't you hear me?" The boy started toward the piazza steps with a shuffling gait.

"You're slower than molasses in January," said Mr. Gayne lazily. "Go up to my room and get my field-glasses. They're on the dresser, I think."

Without a word the boy went into the house and Diana and Mrs. Lowell exchanged a look. Each was hoping the messenger would be successful and not draw upon himself a reprimand from the dark, impatient man smoking in the hammock.

The boy returned empty-handed. "They – they weren't there," he said.

"Weren't where, stu – " Mr. Gayne encountered Mrs. Lowell's gaze as he was in the middle of his epithet. Her eyes were not laughing now, and he restrained himself. "Weren't on the dresser, do you mean?" he continued in a quieter tone. "Well, didn't you look about any?"

"Yes, sir. I looked on the – the trunk and on the – the floor."

Mr. Gayne emitted an inarticulate sound which, but for the presence of the ladies, would evidently have been articulate. "Oh, well," he groaned, rising to a sitting posture on the side of the hammock, "I suppose I shall have to galvanize my old bones and go after them myself."

His nephew's blank look did not change. He stood as if awaiting further orders, and his listless eyes met Mrs. Lowell's kindly gaze.

"It is good fun to look through field-glasses in a place like this, isn't it, Bertie?" she said.

The boy's surprise at being addressed was evident. "I – I don't know," he replied.

His uncle laughed. "That's all the answer you'll ever get out of him, Mrs. Lowell. He's the champion don't-know-er."

The boy's blank look continued the same. It was evident that his uncle's description of him was nothing new.

"I don't believe that," said Mrs. Lowell. "I think Bertie and I are going to be friends. I like boys."

The look she was giving the lad as she spoke seemed for a moment to attract his attention.

"You won't – you won't like me," he said in his usual wooden manner.

"Children and fools," laughed his uncle, rising from the hammock.

"Mr. Gayne!" exclaimed Diana, electrified out of her customary serenity.

The man's restless, dark eyes glanced quickly from the face of one woman to another, even alighting upon Miss Emerson whose countenance only gave its usual indication that the lady had just detected a very unpleasant odor.

He laughed again, good-naturedly, and as he passed his nephew gave him a careless, friendly pat on the shoulder. The unexpected touch startled the boy and made him cringe.

"Bert believes honesty is the best policy," he said. "Don't you, Bert?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy automatically.

"Sit down here a minute, won't you, Bertie?" asked Mrs. Lowell, making a place beside her on the piazza rail. The boy obeyed. "Have you ever seen this great ocean before?"

"No. Yes. I don't know."

"Why, yes, you do know, of course," said Mrs. Lowell, with a soft little laugh, very intimate and pleasant. "You know whether you have seen the ocean before."

The boy regarded her, and in the surprise of being really

challenged to think, he meditated.

"No," he said, at last. "I've never been here before."

"Isn't it a beautiful place?" asked Mrs. Lowell.

"I don't know," returned the boy after a hesitation. Then he looked down on the grass at Philip.

"Do you want to go back and watch Mr. Barrison paint?"

"Yes."

"All right. Run along. We'll talk some other time."

The boy rose and shuffled across the porch and down the steps.

"Mrs. Lowell, it is heart-breaking!" exclaimed Diana softly.

Her companion nodded.

"The situation is incomprehensible," said Diana. "It seems as if Mr. Gayne had some ulterior design which impelled him to stultify any outcropping of intelligence in his nephew. Have you not observed it from the moment of their arrival?"

"Yes, and before we arrived. I noticed them on the train."

"If there's anything I can't bear to have around, it's an idiot," said Miss Emerson. "It gives me the creeps. If he hangs about much, I shall complain to Miss Burridge."

The sweep of the ocean and the rush of the wind made her remark inaudible beyond the piazza. Mrs. Lowell turned to her.

"I think we all have a mission right there, perhaps, Miss Emerson. The boy is not an idiot. I have observed him closely enough to be convinced of that. He is a plant in a dark cellar, and I wonder how many years he has been there. His uncle's methods

turn him into an automaton. If you keep your arm in a sling a few weeks you know it loses its power to act. The boy's brain seems to have been treated the same way. His uncle's every word holds the law over him that he cannot think, or reason, and that he is the stupidest creature living."

"That is true," said Diana. "That is just what he does."

Miss Emerson sniffed. "Well, I didn't come up to Maine on a mission. I came to rest, and I don't propose to have that gawk prowling around where I am."

Nicholas Gayne appeared, his binoculars in his hand. "Would you ladies like to look at the shipping?" he said, approaching. His manner was ingratiating, and Diana conquered the resentment filling her heart sufficiently to accept the glasses from his hand. He was conscious that he had not made a good impression. "The mackerel boats are going out to sea after yesterday's storm," he remarked. "You will see how wonderfully near you can bring them."

Diana adjusted the glass and exclaimed over its power. Miss Emerson jumped up from her chair.

"That's something I want to see," she said, and Diana handed her the glass while Nicholas Gayne scowled at the spinster's brown "transformation." He was not desirous of propitiating Miss Emerson, who, however, pressed him into the service of helping her adjust the screws to suit her eyes, and was effusive in her appreciation of the effect.

"You surely are a benefactor, Mr. Gayne," she said at last, with

enthusiasm.

"Let me be a benefactor to Mrs. Lowell, too," he returned, and the lady yielded up the glass.

"That is the great Penguin Light beyond Crag Island," he said, as Mrs. Lowell accepted the binoculars. "The trees hide it in the daytime, it is so distant, but at night you will see it flash out."

"It is so interesting that you are familiar here, Mr. Gayne," said Miss Emerson. "You must tell us all about the island and show us the prettiest places."

The owner of the binoculars stirred restlessly under the appealing smile the lady was bestowing upon him.

"For myself, I just love to walk," she added suggestively.

"I don't do much walking," he returned shortly. "I come here to sketch."

"Oh, an artist!" exclaimed Miss Emerson, clasping her hands in the extremity of her delight. "Do you allow any one to watch you work? Such a pleasure as it would be."

"It isn't, though," said Nicholas Gayne with an uncomfortable side-glance at his admirer. "My daubs aren't worth watching."

"Oh, that will do for you to say," she returned archly. "I have done some sketching myself. Perhaps I could persuade you to take a pupil."

"Nothing doing," returned the artist hastily. "We all come up here to rest, don't we?" he added.

"Oh, I suppose so," sighed Miss Emerson. "But I do hope you will give me the great pleasure of seeing your work sometime."

She sank back into her chair with a sigh.

"That is a very fine glass," remarked Mrs. Lowell as she returned it to its owner. His brow cleared as he received it.

"Well, I must be off," he said. "I mustn't waste time under these favoring skies."

"Oh, Miss Wilbur," said Miss Emerson, addressing the young girl. "Wouldn't it be lovely if Mr. Gayne would let us go with him and watch him sketch?"

"I am quite ignorant of his art," returned Diana, rising from her seat. "And I still have a great deal of exploring to do on my own account."

Nicholas Gayne cast an admiring glance at the statuesque lines of her face and figure.

"Perhaps you will let me make a sketch of you one of these days, Miss Wilbur." He approached the piazza rail as he spoke and his voice carried down to where Philip was painting under the eyes of the silent, watching boy.

Philip looked up, and, catching the expression with which Gayne seemed to be appraising the young girl, he ruined one of the *n*'s in Inn so that it had to be painted out and done over.

Veronica, her duties finished for the time being, sallied out of doors and approaching Philip looked curiously at his work.

"There's nothing the matter with that," she said encouragingly, and the others came down from the piazza to praise the painter. Miss Emerson followed, but she looked at the sign doubtfully.

"One can't help being sensitive, can one?" she said to Gayne.

"And the wind blows so hard all the time up here, I'm afraid that sign is going to squeak."

"Show me your window," said Philip good-naturedly, "and I'll see if we can't avoid it."

So they all went around to the back of the house where Philip had his ladder waiting and the sign was finally placed to the satisfaction of everybody except Miss Emerson, who considered it on probation.

Nicholas Gayne was still conscious that he had not made a pleasing impression in his treatment of his nephew and it was no part of his programme to attract attention. He approached the boy now.

"What are you going to do with yourself, Bert?"

"I don't know," was the answer.

"Want to come with me?"

"No, sir."

"Well, that's plain enough," said Gayne, laughing and looking around on the company.

"He's a very foolish boy," said Miss Emerson, "when he has an opportunity to watch you sketch."

"Oh, Mr. Gayne!" cried Veronica. "Don't go until you tell us about the haunted farm."

"Where did you ever hear about that?" asked the artist, looking with some favor on Veronica's round and dimpled personality. "I thought you were a stranger here."

"I am, but Genevieve Wilks has just been telling me that you

really saw the spook."

Gayne laughed. "When I came up here last summer, I was told about the haunted farm, and, of course, I was interested in it at once. There are some particularly good views from there. So, naturally, I became one of the ha'nts myself and spent a lot of time with them."

"Oh, but tell us what it looked like," persisted Veronica. "Did you really think you saw one?"

"What a subject for this time of a clear, sunny day," said Gayne, lightly. "Wait until the thunder rolls some stormy night," and, lifting his cap, he hurried away through the field, his sketch-book under his arm.

Diana looked after his receding form.

"It is odd how little like an artist Mr. Gayne looks," she said.

"You mean he should have long hair and dreamy eyes?" asked Philip.

"I think it is the eyes," replied Diana thoughtfully. "I cannot picture his looking with concentration and persistence at anything."

"Oh, I've seen him make a pretty good stab at it," said Philip dryly, thinking of the manner in which he had on several occasions seen him stare at Diana.

At this point the dull boy found his tongue.

"I wouldn't go up there," he said haltingly.

"Up where?" asked Mrs. Lowell encouragingly.

"Up to that farm. It's full of nettles that sting, and then, when

it's dark, ghosts."

The group exchanged glances.

"Who told you that?" asked Philip.

"Uncle Nick."

It did not increase the general admiration of Mr. Gayne that he should take such means for securing safety from his nephew's companionship.

Mrs. Lowell took the boy's arm. "I want to go down to the water," she said. "Will you go with me?"

"Are you afraid to go alone?" he asked.

"I should like it better if you went with me."

He allowed himself to be led around the house, then on among the grassy hummocks and clump of bay and savin and countless blueberry bushes.

"Do you see what quantities of blueberries we are going to have?" asked Mrs. Lowell.

"Are we?"

"Yes. These are berry bushes. Do you like blueberries?"

"I don't know."

Mrs. Lowell laughed and shook the arm she was still holding. "You do know, Bertie," she said. "You must have eaten lots of blueberries." Her merry eyes held his dull ones as she spoke. "I don't like to hear you say you don't know, all the time."

"What difference does it make?" he returned.

"All the difference in the world. The most important thing in life is for us to *know*. There are such quantities of beautiful

things for us to know. This day, for instance. We can know it is beautiful, can't we?"

When they reached the stony beach, she released his arm and sat down among the pebbles. He did not look at them or at the sea; but at her. She wore a blue dress and her brown hair was ruffling in the wind.

"Do you like stones?" she asked.

"I – " he began.

She lifted her hand and laughed again into his eyes. "Careful!" she said. "Don't say you don't know."

The boy's look altered from dullness to perplexity. "But I don't – " he began slowly.

"Then find out right now," she said, lifting a hand full of the smooth pebbles while the tide seethed and hissed near them. She held out her hand to him.

"Pick out the prettiest," she said, and he began pulling them over with his forefinger.

"I love stones," she went on. "See how the ocean has polished them for us. Years and years of polishing has gone to these, and yet we can pick them up on a bright summer morning and have them for our own if we want them."

"There's one sort of green," said Bertie. "Green. That's like me. Uncle Nick says I'm green."

"Uncle Nick doesn't know everything," said Mrs. Lowell quietly, as she took the pebble he had chosen and, laying her handkerchief on the beach, placed the green pebble upon it.

"Now, see if we can find some that you can see the light through. There is one now. See, that one is almost transparent. It is translucent. That is what translucent means. Isn't it a pretty word – and a pretty stone? Hold it up to your eye."

The boy obeyed, a slight look of interest coming into his face. Mrs. Lowell studying him realized what an attractive face his might be. It was as if the promising bud of a flower had been blighted in mid-opening.

"Let us put all the best pebbles on my handkerchief and take them home with us. Have you a father and mother, Bertie?"

"No."

"Do you remember them?"

The boy hesitated and glanced into the kind face bent toward him. Its expression gave the lonely lad a strange sensation. A lump came into his throat and moisture suddenly gathered in his eyes. He swallowed the lump.

"Uncle Nick doesn't want me – to talk about her," he stammered.

"Your mother, do you mean, Bertie?"

The tender tone was too much for the boy. He had to swallow faster and nodded. In a minute two drops ran down his cheeks. He ignored them and began throwing pebbles into the water.

The figure that he made in his outgrown trousers and faded old sweater, trying to control himself, moved his companion, and the sign of his emotion encouraged her. Perhaps he was not so stupid as he seemed.

"I think it would be nice to make a collection of stones while we are here," she said. "I'm sure Miss Burridge will let us have a glass jar. See this one."

Bertie dashed the back of his hand across his eyes and turned to look at the small pebble she offered.

"Isn't that a little beauty?"

"I – "

"Careful!" his companion smiled as she said it and pretended to frown at him in such a merry way that the hint of a smile appeared on his face.

"Uncle Nick likes to have me say I don't know. He says it's honest."

"Well, no two people could be more different than Uncle Nick and me. I want you to *know*, and I want you to say so, because it's what we all have a right to. It is what God wants of us; and, Bertie, if you ever feel like talking about your mother to me, you must do so."

The boy glanced up at her, then down at the pebbles which he pulled over in silence.

"Where do you and your uncle live?"

"In Newark."

"Do you go to school there?"

"No."

"Where do you go to school?"

"Nowhere."

"Where did you learn to read and write then, Bertie?"

"In school. I went when – when *she* was here."

"Your mother?"

"Yes."

"And have you brothers and sisters?"

"No. Just Uncle Nick."

"Does he give you studies to learn?" Mrs. Lowell's catechism was given in such gentle, interested tones that the answers had come easily up to now.

Now the boy hesitated, and she began to expect the stereotyped answer which he had learned was most pleasing, and the easiest way out with his uncle.

"I – " he began, and caught her look. "Sometimes," he added. "But Uncle Nick says it isn't any use – and I don't care anyway, because – she isn't here."

Again Mrs. Lowell could see the spasm in his throat and face. It passed and left the usual dull listlessness of expression.

"Your mother was very sweet," said Mrs. Lowell quietly, and some acknowledgment lighted his eyes as he suddenly looked up at her. "I know that because she made such a deep impression on the little boy she left. How old were you, Bertie, in that happy time when she was here?"

"I – it was Christmas, and there have been – five Christmases since. I remember them on my fingers, and one hand is gone."

Mrs. Lowell met his shifting look with the steady, kind gaze which was so fraught with sympathy that his forlorn, neglected soul turned towards its warmth like a struggling flower to the sun.

"I'll tell you what I think would be beautiful, Bertie," she said. "And it is for you to do everything you do for her, just as if she were here, or as if you were going to see her to-morrow. Did she ever talk to you about God?"

"Yes. I said prayers that Christmas – and I got a sled."

"Do you ever say prayers now?"

"No. It – it doesn't do any good if you – if you live with Uncle Nick. He – he won't let God give you – anything."

"Let me tell you something wonderful, Bertie. Nobody – not even Uncle Nick – can stand between you and God. You know the way your mother loved you? God loves you that way, too. Like a Father and Mother both. So, whenever you think of your mother's love, think of God's love, too. It is just as real. In fact, it was God, you know, who made her love you."

The boy looked up at this.

"Yes. So, whenever you think of God, remember that 'I don't know' must never come into your thought. You *do* know, and you *can* know better every day."

"Uncle Nick won't like it if I know anything."

"Dear child!" burst from Mrs. Lowell at this unconscious revelation of blight. "We will have a secret from Uncle Nick. I am so glad you have told me about your dear mother, and now you are going to start doing everything in the way you think would make her happy if she were here. I am sure she loved everything beautiful. She loved flowers and birds and this splendid ocean that is going to catch us in a minute if we don't move back. What

do you say to letting it catch us! Supposing we take off our shoes and stockings and wade. Doesn't that foam look tempting?"

Color rose in the speaker's cheeks as she finished, and the vitality in her voice was infectious.

"It's – it'll be cold," said the boy.

"Let it. Come on, it will be fun."

She was already taking off her shoes and he followed suit. It gave her a pang to see the holes in his faded socks, but she caught up her skirts and he pulled up his trousers and shrinkingly followed her. The June water was still reminiscent of ice, and she squealed as the foam curled around her ankles, and Bertie hopped up and down until color came into his face, too. The incoming tide, noisier and noisier, drove them farther and farther up the beach, until finally they sat down together on a rock at a safe distance from the water, and the sunlight fell hotly on their glistening feet.

"That was fun!" said Mrs. Lowell, laughing and breathing fast. "Do you know how to swim, Bertie?"

"I – no, I don't."

"That would be a nice thing to learn while you are here. You learn and then teach me."

"Me? Teach you?"

"Of course. Why not? There's a cove in the island where they all swim."

Bertie looked off on the billows. "Would my mother like that?" he asked.

"I'm sure she would, and she would like the collection of stones we are going to make, and she would like you to help Miss Burridge by weeding the garden that they have started. There are so many delightful things to do in the world, and you are going to do them all – for her."

"All for her," echoed Bertie. "And not tell Uncle Nick," he added.

"No. You and I will keep the secret."

Mrs. Lowell looked at him with a smile, and the neglected boy, his dull wits stimulated by this amazing experience of comradeship, smiled back at her, the smile of the little child who in that far-away happy Christmas had received a sled.

CHAPTER IV
BIOGRAPHY

"Well, good-bye, Miss Priscilla," said Philip, coming into the kitchen a few mornings afterward. "This landlubber life won't do for me any longer."

Small Genevieve was at the sink washing dishes and Veronica was drying them.

Miss Burridge slid her last loaf of bread into the oven and then stood up and faced him.

"Philip Barrison," she said emphatically, "you have been a blessing for these weeks. I hate to see you go. Now, how much do I owe you for all the good things you've done for me?"

Philip laughed and, throwing his arms around her, gave her a hearty smack on the cheek.

"What do I owe you for popovers and corn fritters?" he rejoined. "Just don't let Veronica chew gum, nor let Genevieve flirt with Marley Hughes and we'll call it square."

Genevieve turned up her little nose and giggled, and Veronica looked scornful.

"Now, don't you tell me that Puppa liked it," he continued to her. "Besides, anybody that lives with your Aunt Pris has so many nicer things to chew there is no excuse. Oh, Miss Priscilla, how I hate to say adieu to the waffles!"

"Well, you must come real often, Phil. I heard you was goin' to give us a concert at the hall sometime this summer. Is that so? I do hope you will."

"I shouldn't wonder. My accompanist is coming to-day and we shall do a little work and a lot of fishing."

"Is he a young feller? You must bring him up to play croquet with the girls."

"Well, I don't know whether he has any experience as an Alpine climber or not."

"Why, I don't think it's such an awful bad ground. Do you, Veronica?"

"Not if he's real nice and hasn't any whiskers," replied the girl. "Heaven knows he'll be better than nothing. Such a place as this and not a beau! It's a crime."

"How about me?" inquired Philip modestly.

Veronica lifted her upper lip disdainfully. "Oh, you, with your lectures and your goddesses! What earthly good are you?"

"Cr-rushed!" exclaimed Philip.

"Talked to Mrs. Lowell all last evening on the piazza in that lovely moonlight. The idea of wasting it on a *Mrs.* I suppose there's a *Mr.* to her."

"Yes, and he's coming before the summer is over. The worst of it is she seems to like him."

"Children, children," said Miss Burridge, and she winked toward the back of Genevieve's head. Well she knew the alertness of the ears that were holding back those tight braids of hair.

"Yes, my accompanist, Barney, is a broth of a boy, but I shall tell him, Veronica, that ten o'clock is the limit, the very extreme limit."

The girl flushed and laughed. "You mind your business now, Mr. Barrison, and I'll attend to mine. I'm perfectly capable of it."

"Very well. I'll simply keep Puppa's address on my desk, and I won't use it unless I really have to," said Phil, in a conscientious tone which nearly caused Veronica to throw a cup at him.

"Go along now if you must, Philip," said Miss Priscilla. "And I do thank you, dear boy. We shall miss you every minute. Give my love to your grandmother. I wish she could get up as far as this. You tell her so."

"All right, I will. Do you know where Miss Wilbur is?"

"Aha!" said Veronica softly.

"I don't want to go without saying good-bye to her."

"I should hope not," jeered Veronica. "I suppose you won't see her again all summer."

"Oh, yes, I shall, unless Barney Kelly cuts me out."

"Sure, it's Oirish he is, thin?"

"Faith, and he is, and a bit chipped off the original blarney stone at that. Trust him not, Veronica."

"I only hope I'll get the chance, but if you're going to set him on the goddess, what sort of a look-in will I have? I've got five on my nose already."

"Five what, woman?"

"Freckles. Can't you see them from there? It will be fulsome

flattery if you say you can't."

Philip squinted up his eyes and came nearer to examine.

"You remember what I said. Tell Barney they're beauty spots – 'golden kisses of the sun.'"

"Oh, ain't that pretty!" shouted Genevieve. "I'm speckled with 'em jest like a turkey egg, but I don't mind 'em the way Veronica does. I've got some powder at home and I powder over 'em."

"At your age, Genevieve!" exclaimed Philip sternly. "What shall I do with the extravagance and artificiality of this generation! Don't you know, Genevieve, that the money you spend for powder should go into the missionary box? You poor, lost, little soul!"

Genevieve giggled delightedly, and Miss Burridge, at the window, exclaimed:

"There's Miss Wilbur now, Phil, looking at the garden bed."

"If I were she," said Veronica, "I wouldn't have a word to say to you after the way you wasted last evening."

"If only she thought so, too!" groaned Philip. "But I'm not in it with her astronomy map for June. She is a hundred times more interested to know where Jupiter and Venus are than where I am – natural, I suppose – all in the family." He threw open the kitchen door and, standing on the step, threw kisses toward the group within.

"Good-bye, summer!" he sang. "*Good-bye, good-bye.*"

The beauty of his voice had its usual effect on Diana, who stood by the strip of green, growing things, looking in his

direction, her lips slightly parted over her pretty teeth.

"You see I'm good-bye-ing," he said, approaching her.

"Are you leaving us?" she returned, allowing her clasped hands to fall apart. "See how well the sweet peas are doing."

"Yes, I'm leaving you all in good shape. Do you think you can go on behaving yourselves without my watchful guardianship and Christian example?"

"I think we shall miss you. Mr. Gayne is not a fair exchange."

"Thank you. Mrs. Lowell was talking to me about that outfit last evening. She is quite stirred up about the boy."

"Yes," rejoined Diana. "I think she is a wonderful woman. She has taken him down to the beach with her again this morning. She believes that Mr. Gayne is his nephew's enemy rather than his guardian. She believes he has some reason for desiring to blight any buddings of intelligence in the boy, and uses an outrageous method of suppression over him all the time. It would be so much easier to let it go, and most of us would, I'm sure, rather than spend vacation hours in such insipid company, or have any dealings with that – that impossible uncle; but Mrs. Lowell will not relinquish her efforts."

"Yes, she is a brilliant, fearless sort of woman," said Philip. "I shouldn't wonder if she gave Gayne a disagreeable quarter of an hour before she gets through with him."

"One has to exercise care, however," returned Diana, "lest the man become angered and visit his ill-humor on the boy. I am often obliged to constrain myself to civility when I yearn to hurl

– " she hesitated.

"Plates? Oh, do say you long to throw a plate at him!"

Diana gave her remote moonbeam smile.

"I must admit that 'invective' was in my mind. A rather strong word for girls to use."

"A splendid word. A good long one, too. You might try hurling polysyllables at him some day and see him blink."

Diana shook her head. "That sort of man is a pachyderm. He would never flinch at verbal missiles. Since you must go, I wish some other agreeable man would join our group and converse with him at table."

Philip smiled. "Surely you have noticed that Miss Emerson is not averse to assuming all responsibility?"

"Mr. Barrison," said Diana gravely, "I hope when I am – am elderly and unmarried, that I shall not seek to attract men."

"Miss Wilbur," returned Philip, with a solemnity fitting hers, and regarding the symmetry and grace of her lovely head, "don't spend any time worrying about that; for some inner voice assures me that you will never be elderly and unmarried."

"The future is on the knees of the gods," she returned serenely.

"Then I don't need to lose any sleep on account of your posing for one of Mr. Gayne's wonderful sketches?"

Diana brought the brown velvet of her eyes to bear fully upon him. It even seemed hopeful that a spark would glow in them.

"I loathe the man," she said slowly.

"Forgive me, divine one. Well, I must go now. Why won't

you take me home? I should like you to meet my grandmother, and think of the pitfalls and mantraps of the island road if I risk myself alone: Bill Lindsay's Ford! Marley Hughes's bicycle! Lou Buell's gray mare taking him to mend somebody's broken pipe! Matt Blake's express wagon! Come and keep my courage up."

"You have a grandmother on this island?"

"I'll prove it if you'll come with me."

Diana smiled and moved along beside him. "It doesn't seem a real, mundane, earthly place to me yet," she said. "It must be wonderful to have a solid *pied-à-terre* here. They tell me there are many summer cottages, but they are far from our Inn and I haven't realized them yet. I am hoping my parents will consent to purchasing some ground here for me."

"Where do you usually go in summer?"

"Our cottage is at Newport, but I like better Pittsfield, where we go in the autumn."

Philip looked around at her as she moved along through the field beside him. "Is your middle name Biddle?" he asked.

"No, I have no middle name."

"I thought in Philadelphia only the descendants of the Biddles had cottages at Newport and Pittsfield."

Diana smiled. "I know that is a stock bit of humor. What was that about an Englishman who said he had seen Niagara Falls and almost every other wonder of America except a Biddle? He had not yet seen one."

"When do you laugh, Miss Wilbur?" asked Philip suddenly.

"Why, whenever anything amuses me, of course."

"Yet you like the island, although it has never amused you yet. I have lived in the house with you for two weeks and I haven't heard you laugh."

Diana looked up at him and laughed softly. "How amusing!" she said.

He nodded. "It's very good-looking, very. Do that again sometime. How did you happen to run away from family this season?"

"I was tired and almost ill, and some people at home had been here and told me about it. So I came, really incontinently. I did not wait to perfect arrangements, and when I arrived in a severe rainstorm one evening, I found great kindness at the house my friends had told me of, but no clean towels. They were going to have a supply later, but meanwhile I lost my heart to the view from our Inn piazza and Miss Burridge found me there one day and took me in for better or for worse. That explains me. Now, what explains your having a grandmother here?"

"Her daughter marrying my father, I imagine. My grandfather was a sea-captain, Cap'n Steve Dorking. He had given up the sea by the time I came along."

"Here? Were you born here?"

"Yes."

"That explains the maritime tints in your eyes. Even when they laugh the sparkle is like the sun on the water. Continue, please."

"Well, my father, who came here to fish, met my mother,

fell in love, married her, and took her away. He was very clever at everything except making money, it seems, so my mother came home within a year to welcome me on to the planet. My grandfather had a small farm, and I was his shadow and one of his 'hands' until I was eight years old."

"Was it a happy life?"

"It was. I remember especially the smell of Grammy's buttery, sweet-smelling cookies, and gingerbread, and apple pies with cinnamon. It smells the same way now. Do you wonder I like to come back?"

"You stimulate my appetite," said Diana.

"Oh, she'll give you some. There were many jolly things in those days to brighten the life of a country boy. The way the soft grass felt to bare feet in the spring, and in the frosty autumn mornings when we went to the yard to milk and would scare up the cows so those same bare feet could stand in the warm place where the cows had lain. Then came winter and snowdrifts – making snow huts and coasting down the hills. Sliding and skating on the ice-filled hollows. It was all great. I'm glad I had it."

"You test my credulity, Mr. Barrison, when you speak of ice and snow in this poetic home of summer breezes."

He looked down at her. "We will have a winter house-party at Grammy's sometime and convince you."

"So at eight years of age you went out into the world?"

"Yes, at my dear mother's apron strings. My father had spent

some time with us every year and at last secured a living salary and took us to town. The first thing I did in the glitter of the blinking lamp-posts was to fall in love. I prayed every night for a long time that I might marry that girl. She had long curls and I reached just to her ear. I received her wedding cards a year or so ago. I was always praying for something, but only one of my prayers has ever been answered. I was always very devout in a thunderstorm, and I prayed that I might not be struck by lightning and I never have been yet."

"When was your wonderful voice discovered?"

"Look here, Miss Wilbur, you are tempting me to a whole biography, and it isn't interesting."

"Yes, I am interested in – in your mother."

"My poor mother," said Philip, in a different tone. "When I was twelve years old my father was taken ill and soon left us. My mother had to struggle and I had to stop school and go to work. The first job I got was lathing a house. I walked seven miles into the country and put the laths on that house. I worked hard for a whole week and received twelve dollars and seventy-five cents. It was a ten-dollar gold piece, two silver dollars, fifty cents, and a quarter."

Diana lifted sympathetic eyes.

"I bought a suit of clothes and gave up the gold piece. The perfect lady clerk failed to give me credit for it and six months afterward the store sent the bill to my mother. I put up a heated argument, you may be sure, and before the matter was settled,

the perfect lady clerk skipped with another woman's husband. So the powers inclined to believe me rather than her."

"Poor little boy," put in Diana. "But your music?"

"Yes. Well, our minister's wife took an interest in me and gave me lessons on the organ. I never would practice, though. I would pick out hymns with one finger while I stood on one foot and pumped the pedal with the other. It was results I was after; but the cornet allured me, and I learned to play that well enough to join the Sunday-School orchestra.

"A cousin of my mother's came to our rescue sufficiently to let me go to school, and in all my spare time I did odd jobs, some of them pretty strenuous; but I was a strong youngster, and evidently bore a charmed life, for I challenged fate on trains, on top of buildings, and in engine rooms. But I'll spare you the harrowing details. At the spring commencement of the high school, I was invited to sing a solo. I warbled good old 'Loch Lomond' and forgot the words and was mortified almost to death, but the audience was enthusiastic, I have always believed out of pity."

"No no," breathed Diana.

"Well, at any rate, they insisted on an encore, and I was so braced up by the applause and so furious at myself that I gave them 'The Owl and the Pussy Cat."'

"Oh."

"I see you don't know it. Well, next day I met a lady on the street who was very musical, it seemed, and she invited me to come to her house and talk over studying music. She said I had

a great responsibility. Oh, you don't want to hear all this!"

"I do, I do."

"My mother passed away soon afterward, and the musical friend in need – good friend she was, and is – told me of a town a hundred miles away where there were vacancies she knew of in choir positions. She would give me a letter of introduction and she believed I could qualify for one of them. I didn't tell her the slimness of my cash after my dear mother's funeral expenses were paid, and she didn't know. So I traveled that hundred miles on a freight train. When I first boarded it, I crawled into the fire-box of a new engine that was being transported over that line. It grew very cold before we had gone far, and I crawled out and climbed over the coal tender and opened the hole where they put the water in. I climbed down into that empty place and lighted a match only to find that there were about twenty bums there ahead of me. I didn't stay there long, for I was good and plenty afraid; some of them looked desperate. I climbed out again and went along the train till I came to a flat-car loaded with a new threshing machine. I saw a brakeman coming along with a lantern, and I knew if he saw me he'd put me off. So I climbed into the back of the threshing machine and down into its very depths, and after a while, when I had become chilled to the marrow, the train came to a halt. I crawled out and down to the ground and ran around to get warm. They were doing some switching and I saw they added two cars to the train. One had stock in one end and hay and grain in the other. They had to leave the door open to let in air for the

stock, and up I climbed and hid under the straw and slept soundly the rest of the journey. Oh, I was dirty when I arrived! But my precious letter was safe in an inside pocket, and with the contents of the little bundle I had, and the expenditure of part of my small stock of money, I made myself decent and presented my letter of introduction. The organist of one of the churches tried me out. He liked my voice so much that he engaged me and was even interested enough to let me live at his house; but three dollars a Sunday was the salary and the voice lessons I engaged would be four dollars a week, so, of course, I had to go to work at once, and I got a job in a big sash and door factory where I worked like a horse ten hours a day."

"Why, Mr. Barrison," sighed Diana, "you are a hero."

Philip laughed. "I had no leisure to think about that. Times grew very slack and there began to be great danger that I would lose my job in the factory. They said they would have to lay me off unless I would whitewash an old building they had bought to store lumber. So I was given a brush and a barrel of lime-water and told to go at it. If I lost my job, I wouldn't be able to live. So I wrapped my feet in sacks to try to keep warm – it was late November – and went at it: and there were girls, Miss Wilbur, girls! And I couldn't put it over them after Tom Sawyer's fashion. Well, I had sung there just thirteen Sundays when the blow fell. The committee told me very kindly that they wanted to try another tenor. I went home from that talk with a heart heavy as lead. I could not sleep, and near midnight I began to cry.

Yes, I did cry. I was twenty-one and I had voted, but I was the most broken-hearted boy in the State. I must have cried for two or three hours, pitying myself to the utmost, up three flights of stairs in that little attic room, with the rain pouring on the roof over my head, when all at once I jumped out of bed as dry-eyed as if I'd never shed a tear and, lifting my right hand as high as possible, I made a vow. I said – So help me, God, I will become a singer if I have to walk over everybody in the attempt. I will learn to sing, and these mutts will listen to me and pay to hear me, too. Then I jumped back into bed and fell asleep instantly."

"Splendid!" said Diana. "And how did you keep the vow?"

"Well, next morning I began to figure what I must do. I knew I hadn't enough education. I remembered that three years before I had won a scholarship for twenty weeks' free tuition in a business college in Portland, and I decided that I would need fifty dollars. The same cousin who had helped me before to go to school, came across. I quit my job, paid my bills, and left for Portland, getting there at Christmas. I sang at the Christmas-tree exercises in my home church. I went to school as I planned, took care of the furnace for the rent of my room, took care of three horses, got the janitorship of a church – "

Diana looked up with a sudden smile. "And forced up the thermometer when you overslept."

Philip burst into a hearty laugh. "Did Miss Burridge give me away? I tell you I saved that church lots of coal that winter."

"Oh, continue. I did not mean to interrupt you, for now you

are coming to the climax."

"Nothing very wonderful, Miss Wilbur, but I found I had that to give that people were willing to pay for, and I began going about in country places giving recitals, mixing humorous recitations in with the groups of songs, playing my own accompaniments and sometimes having to shovel a path through the snow to the town hall before my audience could come in. I wonder if Caruso ever had to shovel snow away from the Metropolitan Opera House before his friends could get in to hear him! After that I worked my way through two years at college, studying with a good voice teacher. Then came the war. I got through with little more than a scratch and was in one of the first regiments to be sent home after the armistice was signed. The lady who first discovered my voice had influential musical friends in New York. She sent me to them, and, to make a long story a little shorter, last winter I was under an excellent management, obtained a church position, and have sung at a good many recitals. The coming winter looks hopeful." Philip put his hand on his heart and bowed. "Thanking you for your kind attention – here we are at Grammy's."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.