

INTRODUCTION

January first, 1943, was not just another day. It was not only the first day of a new year to me, but it was the first day of a new era. The old moulds had suddenly broken and I knew that on the highway of life I had come to a wide place on the road.

Hitherto I had done certain things on each day of the week, circumstances driving. Now I was free. Nothing mattered. I could stop and stare, dawdle, dream or drift, do anything I wished or—nothing. The books had closed. I could not comprehend it all at first. I felt as stripped and bare as the old horse with his harness gone!

I became acutely sensitive to my surroundings; the old familiar objects became doubly dear. The sun, sea and sky were mine now to enjoy. I listened to the robins busy with the arbutus berries, and filling the air with excited conversation like women waiting for the store to open for a bargain sale. They were getting ready for their long trek south, and were putting in one good meal before they started. . . . The sun was running over the green fields playing strange tricks with the trees on the headlands. The green fields here at the coast, fed by the winter rains, cheat the gloomiest day and make it impossible for anyone to feel sad. Everything that I saw that day as I looked out of my window had a merry look, even the washing on the line under the bare cherry trees made a gay showing of color and graceful billowings. The yellow jasmine that had now reached the window sill smiled at me, with its dainty golden stars, and I smiled back.

What had I to be so glad about?