Garnet came running down the school hallway to meet me. She was wearing the biggest, brightest, most radiant smile I had ever seen on her pretty face. There were stars in her eyes. She seemed to be floating on a beautiful pink cloud of happiness and utter joy. "I'm engaged!" she exclaimed in a whisper of breathless ecstasy.
"Engaged!" I was incredulous.

"Yes, Meg, engaged!" she repeated, pirouetting round and round on her dainty little feet in front of me. "Honestly, I'm so happy that I could cry. It still seems totally unreal. But it's not; it's true. Last night Steve asked me to marry him and I said Yes. Imagine it, dearest Meg; by June 15th. I'll be Mrs. Stephen Downs! You'll be my very special maid of honor. Oh, I'm all breathless with excitement."

I was breathless, too, but with silence. I guess my mouth was open wide with shock for Garnet said, "Don't gape at me like that, Meg. And please close your mouth. I've never been this happy in my entire life. Today we celebrate, you and I, at The Chocolate Shop. The treat's on me."

I recovered sufficiently enough to ask, "What does your mother think about it? And your dad, too? Are they as elated as you?"

"No, of course not. But then, what can Mother say? Or Dad? They were married young. About like Steve and I will be when we get married . . . seventeen and eighteen, respectively."

I was now not only breathless but speechless, as well. So, what did one say to a best friend who was seeing nothing but stars and rainbows and roses and baby's breath and stephonitis already arranged in an exquisitely beautiful and elegant bridal bouquet? Nothing! Absolutely nothing. My words, for the present, at least, would have been futile and meaningless. Nothing I could have said would have had any effect upon Garnet and her decision. She was living in a rosy world of glory and wonder and beauty. For the moment, at least.

We separated at door number 9, my home room. But not before she had reminded me about the celebration treat at Johnny and Vera's Chocolate Shop immediately after school.

Concentration on my lessons was difficult since I could not visualize Garnet as a steady and daily dutiful housewife, doing nothing but cooking and cleaning and washing and ironing. Like I said, we were best friends and, as such, we knew each other's likes and dislikes, the weaknesses and strengths and tastes and distastes. So, knowing what I did about Garnet, I knew she was certainly not ready to become a steady homemaker. Like
myself, she was not mature enough for this mammoth task and this sudden transition of leaving seventeen's more-carefree days for the day-by-day, hour-by-hour, never-done work of a homemaker and housekeeper. But what could I do? I hadn't been asked for my opinion. Still, I couldn't just sit idly by and watch her make a grave mistake, either.

My mind went to Steve then, carefree, good-looking, easy-going Steve. He was a real gem. This I knew. But he had no steady work. Surely he wasn't thinking of quitting school now, not when he was so close to graduating! Or was he contemplating such a thing? I wondered.

The mere thought of Steve doing such a thing sent shivers racing up and down my spine. What would they live on, unless he did find steady work? I wondered quickly, feeling panicky and frightened for two of the finest young people in the world. One needed more than stars in the eyes and love to live on, I knew. (My parents had drummed this into us. And I mean, drummed).

"Your answer, Margaret," Mr. Hackenberg said, as he sliced into my anything-but-class thoughts.

I felt my face flush a scarlet-red. "I . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Hackenberg," I apologized. "I wasn't paying attention, I'm sorry to say. My mind was on something else."

"Get it off whatever you were thinking about, Meg," he said kindly, "and come to class. Mentally, I mean.""

He gave me another of his warm, friendly smiles then looked toward the blackboard.

Again I felt the color rush to my cheeks. "I will," I answered softly. "It's a solemn promise."

For the remainder of that school day I kept my promise. It was a bit difficult, you may be sure, but I fulfilled my vow to its maximum. Sure, what Garnet had told me projected itself numerous times to my thinking. But, resolutely and firmly, I pushed it away and concentrated on the lessons and studies before me. I had been taught early in life that the way by which one could rid himself or herself of unwanted and/or unwholesome thoughts was by filling his mind with good thoughts, wholesome and lofty thoughts. This, of
course was in essence what the Apostle Paul was saying when he admonished the Philippians to think only upon things true, honest, just, pure and lovely, and of good report. (Philippians 4:8).

Garnet was waiting for me on the top step of the school exit at dismissal. Her smile was still as radiant as when she broke the news to me that morning. Her long auburn hair caught the sun's afternoon rays and shone a magnificent red-brown. I was so happy that Steve would be getting such a fine and wonderful person. And vice versa. If only they'd have a sufficient amount of patience and could wait till each had graduated! I thought with a catch at my heart.

"I couldn't concentrate on a single thing today," Garnet admitted with open candor, her eyes alight with a joy known only to the engaged, I was sure.

"And you with that test in chemistry!" I exclaimed, thankful that I hadn't opted for that subject. "Chemistry and I managed very well, Meg. This, in spite of me being transported and living on a cloud. But my mind certainly was not on lessons today. Believe me, it wasn't. O well, let's forget about lessons; we're going to celebrate. Hungry?" she asked, as she linked her arm through mine.

"Not really."

She gave me a quick sideways glance "Something bothering you, Meg?" she asked.

I felt tears jump to the surface of my eyes. "Just concerned, that's all," I said quickly.

"About whom? Or what?"

Garnet could be so innocent at times that it was painful. "Let's wait till we're devouring one of Johnny and Vera's Mountain Top sundaes," I answered, brushing the unruly tears away quickly.

"Okay, Meg. That's a good idea."
We walked in silence the rest of the way, our footsteps matching rank and file like a couple of well-taught, much-practiced soldiers, each occupied and enveloped in her own thoughts.

We were mid-way through our Mountain Topper when Garnet said, "Your concern, Meg; what is it? Or would you rather not share it? No hard feeling if you'd rather not, you know that. That touchiness was all taken away the night I was sanctified wholly."

"Yes, I know," I assured her. "You've really changed since the carnal nature was crucified. And, yes, I'd like to share my deep concern with you. I'm not at all sure, though, that you're going to appreciate me if I tell you. We are best friends; I'd like for it to remain this way. . . ."

With my sentence trailing, Garnet dropped her spoon onto the table and looked at me with her great and big, honest eyes, exclaiming, "Is it because of Steve and me?"

There came my tears again. "Yes," I answered softly.

"O Meg," she cried, "I'll come around to see you every bit as often as I do now. This won't mar our friendship one bit. I promise."

"It's not the friendship part," I admitted. "Not at all. I, too, am dead to self and its selfish desires and wishes. And, really, when one marries, her first allegiance must be to her mate. God takes first place of all, in everything, of course. But I mean that. . . ."

"You mean that a woman or a man, when they marry, should give priority to their mate and stay at home and not gad about; right?" Garnet asked, gleaning the meaning of my unfinished sentence.

"I believe God intended for it to be this way when one is married," I answered. "The Bible says she, the woman, is, 'To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed,' end of Scriptural quote as found in Titus 2:5. So I do feel this means that woman should not be gadding about all the time. And really, Garnet, if a woman fulfills her role as wife and mother to its fullest and richest capacity, she will have very little time left for running around. I've not only helped mother in the house, but I've observed her also; homemaking's a
full, every-day job. Mother's never done, it seems. Each day we do many of the same jobs over and over, as we work together. I enjoy doing this with Mother, but wanting to assume full responsibility of it . . on my own, I mean . . No. I'm not ready to toss away my remaining few teen years for a day-in, day out, full-time homemaking job."

Garnet's face turned pale. "I . . . I guess I hadn't thought about that aspect of marriage, Meg," she admitted honestly. "And I'm not at all sure that I'd be satisfied . . . just yet . . . with doing nothing but cleaning and cooking and washing and ironing." She looked like she was going to cry.

I reached across the table and patted her hand consolingly. "Mom told me that being a teenager is hard. It's because we're no longer a child; we want to make our own decisions, many times feeling almost as though we knew better than our parents what is best for us. But, like Mom told me so kindly one day, 'Remember, Margaret dear, you are not yet an adult, either. Please allow us the privilege of guiding you as God leads us. You won't regret it, and neither will you be sorry that you did.'"

Garnet swallowed hard. Tears sprang to her eyes. "Poor Mom!" she exclaimed, burying her face in her hands. "When I told her that Steve and I planned a June wedding, she cried. 'No, Garnet. No!' she said. 'Wait until you're through high school, at least. You're too young. Give your mind and your emotions time to catch up with your body. Please!' She begged me to wait, Meg!"

"Well, you're not married yet," I said. "You aren't bound; you haven't taken those sacred vows."

"Meaning . . .?"

"You can change that wedding date."

"But I love Steve, Meg. I really do."

"True love can wait, my mother says. Remember when I thought B.J. was my true love?" We giggled together, remembering.

"Mom set my mind to doing some serious thinking," I confided. "She brought my head out of the clouds with, 'Do you suppose that the dreams,
the goals, or the future you have in mind now will be the same dreams and desires you'll have at twenty-one, Margaret? In some few cases this may be so, but not in most. I recall my own teen years,' Mom went on, 'and I remember how immature and naive I was. I had no idea what I wanted out of life, and really didn't care.' Those words set me to thinking. And wondering. Did I know what I wanted? The answer came back as big as daylight; no. I was in love, all right; in love with love. That's the honest truth, Garnet. And the more I prayed about it and sought after God's will, so much more I realized that I was not in love with B. J. Littleton. As I just said, I was in love with love."

"It's a bit frightening, isn't it?"

"Mom says not. She said if I'd wait . . . that's a key word for teens she says, wait . . . well, she said things would all fall into place one day. In God's timing and His way. When I was so sure that B.J. was the only one for me, Mom asked me did I feel he'd be able to hold my interest and admiration and love for the rest of my entire life? And, would I be able to give him the love and understanding and encouragement he'd need from his wife?"

"It was a staggering question and thought. I, who was still quite dependent upon Mom to have dinner ready at five and to keep most of my clothes washed and ironed and ready for us. It really got me to thinking. Would I still be on cloud nine when I awoke to a bristly-faced, groggy-eyed man in the morning? And would he love me with my long hair tangled and unkempt looking after sleeping on it all night? Marriage meant living with the real man, minus the glamour and the glitter of dating days, I began to realize."

"And it frightened you," Garnet said simply. "Terribly," I admitted. "When I began to face reality, I realized that I wasn't ready for the responsibilities of married life. I was still too immature. And I am yet. I'll be the first to admit. Now, more than ever, I am seeking only the whole will of God. Mom says I'll really 'live happily ever after' if I allow God to make my choice of a life's companion. And I mean to let Him make the selection for me, Garnet."

"O Meg, I'm sure Steve and I are meant for each other. But I can see that we're not ready for marriage. He has no steady work. And dropping out of school would be foolish, since he's so near to graduation. I told him this
once, but he said we'd make it somehow. Now I can see this isn't the thing to do. O Meg," she said, getting to her feet, "thanks for everything you said. I'm seeing things through wisdom's eyes, namely, your mother's. That wedding can wait until not only Steve has graduated but until I have received my diploma, too. Thanks, again. You really are a friend. I'll see you later, God-willing. Right now I must have a long, "down-to-earth with both feet on the ground talk" with Mr. Special. And this time my head must not be in the clouds..."

I felt warm tears moistening my eyes. Knowing Garnet and Steve, I was sure that, in God's time, they would become Mr. & Mrs. I felt suddenly very happy. A couple years could do wonders for teens. It really could! Me included.