

FICTION

Margaret Widdemer

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A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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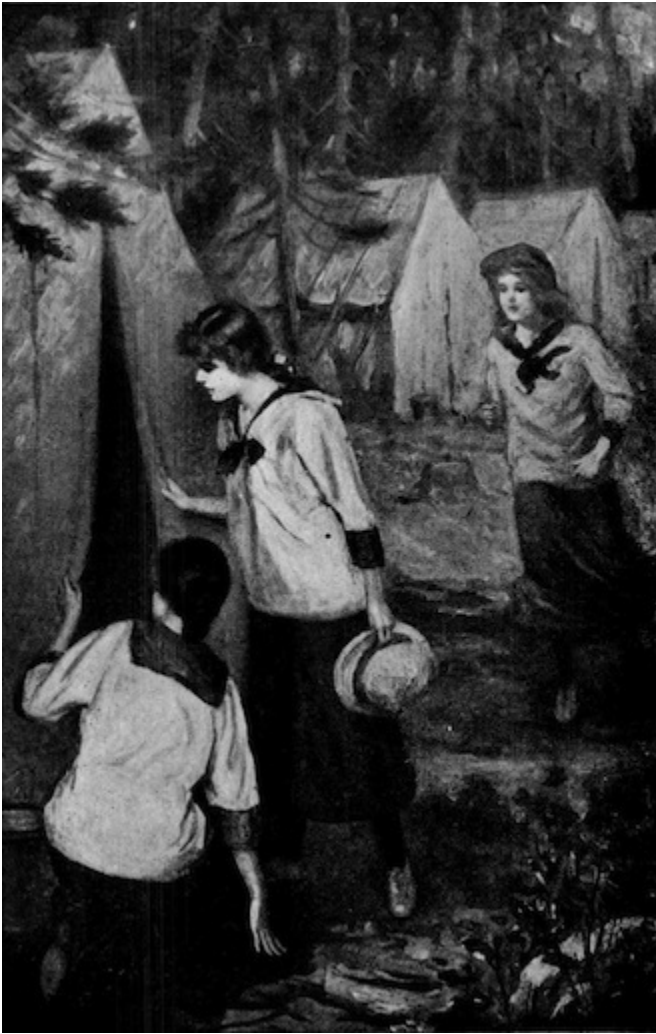
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Camp Fire



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THEY DESCENDED IN A BODY ON ADELAIDE'S TENT *Page 125*

## WINONA OF THE CAMP FIRE

By MARGARET WIDDEMER

Author of

"Winona of Camp Karonya," "Winona's War

Farm," "Winona's Way."



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# **WINONA OF THE CAMP FIRE**

## 7CHAPTER ONE

The room they called the Den in Winnie Merriam's house was dark, except for the leaping wood-fire in the big stone fireplace. Around the fire sat and lay five girls. They had been toasting marshmallows, but they were past the point where you eat the toasted ones with pleasure, or even steal the raw ones--which don't taste burnt--to eat surreptitiously.

"Helen Bryan, you've been feeding Puppums all your marshmallows for the last ten minutes," accused Winnie, sitting up. She had been draping herself along a pile of cushions for the last fifteen minutes--thinking, evidently, for she had been quiet--a very unusual thing for chattering Winnie.

Winnie Merriam was fourteen, but people usually took her for a year older, because of her slim height. She had big blue eyes in a face that was not regularly pretty, perhaps, but so gay and pink-cheeked and quick-smiling that people always *said* she was pretty--which does quite as well.

Her chum, Helen, defiantly fed a last marshmallow to the fat near-fox-terrier in the centre of the circle, who didn't particularly seem to want it.

"I've got to be polite to my hostess's dog, haven't I?" she retorted. "And he asked for them so pathetically!"

"I expect the poor old pup will look more pathetic this time to-morrow," said Winnie. "He'll probably look like Buster Brown's Tige in the last pictures--both paws up over his aching head. Then you'll have to come back here and hold ice on his fevered brow, won't she, Puppums?"

"Or yours, maybe," suggested Marie Hunter, the quiet brown girl in the corner. "What's the matter, Win? You haven't said a word for ages. I've been watching you."

"I've been *thinking*!" explained Winnie, nodding her curly brown head with dignity.

"For the first time?" suggested Helen. "Don't do it if it hurts, honey."

"No," said Winnie placidly, "I've often been known to do it."

"Well, what were you thinking?" asked Edith Hillis, lifting her yellow curls from Marie's lap. Edith was the fluffy member of the crowd, small for her age, yellow-haired and blue-eyed and rather too much dressed. She was supposed to care more for her complexion than for anything else on earth except Marie Hunter, but she was as sweet-tempered as she could be, and everybody liked her. "You looked as if you were thinking about something awfully interesting."

"Well," said Winnie slowly, "I was thinking about *us*. We know each other very, very well, and go together, and have gorgeous times--I was thinking that it would be nice if we made ourselves into a club, or some sort of a society."

"Oh, say! That's a perfectly gorgeous idea!" exclaimed chubby, red-haired Louise Lane, from behind Helen. "I vote we *be* a club, right away!"

"But is five enough?" asked Marie doubtfully. Marie was always the one who thought of things. She was a good deal of a bookworm, and did a great deal of beautiful embroidery, and never said much. But she was the one the girls were apt to ask advice of if they needed it badly. She was nearly a year older than Winnie and Edith. Louise wasn't quite fourteen, and Helen would be fifteen in two months.

"I think five's plenty," said Louise.

"I don't, exactly," demurred Winnie. "Seems to me there ought to be seven or eight anyway, or we'd be like an army all major-generals."

"All right," came from Helen sleepily. "But that can wait. I think the thing to make up our minds about first is--what would it do if it was a club? I mean clubs have to have some object."

"Why!" exclaimed Winnie blankly, "I never thought of that!"

"Well," still opposed Louise, "I don't see why we have to have an object. Just meet, and have a president and secretary and things, and enjoy ourselves."

"What about an embroidery club?" suggested Edith. "Marie and I like to embroider."

"I *don't*," said Louise flatly. 10

"Nannie was telling me about a walking-club she belonged to," Helen suggested pacifically.

Nannie was Helen's step-mother--not at all like the step-mothers in the fairy-tales, but a pretty, gay woman of about twenty-eight, who was great friends with her step-daughter and the step-daughter's chums.

"A hiking-club?" asked Winnie. "That would be fun. Why couldn't we combine both those things in one?"

"Lovely!" jeered Louise. "I can see myself trotting along up a mountain, embroidering as I go!"

"Listen to Louise being sarcastic!" said Helen. "I think the idea of combining two or three things is a splendid one."

"What's splendid?" asked a bright voice from the darkness at the other end of the room.

"Oh, are you there, Nannie?" called Helen. "We're planning a club--a very fine combination club where you do everything."

"It sounds like a Camp Fire," said Nannie. "Your father's downstairs, Helen. I ran up to tell you that we're ready to go whenever you are."

"Oh, not yet, please!" begged Winnie. "What is a Camp Fire, Mrs. Bryan? Do come sit down by us, and have some marshmallows."

"It corresponds to the Boy Scouts," Mrs. Bryan explained, dropping down among the girls, "and it includes doing about everything there is to do. It's national, though, and you're affiliated with headquarters."



THEY MADE HER TELL THEM ALL SHE KNEW ABOUT CAMP FIRES

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"Regular dues and meetings?" asked Helen, pricking up her ears. "Oh, stay here, Nannie, and tell us all about it!"

They surrounded Mrs. Bryan, and made her tell them all she knew about Camp Fires, which was a good deal.

"I like it!" announced Louise when Mrs. Bryan was done. "Me be heap big chiefess--wahoo-oo!"

She jumped up as she spoke and waved Helen's best hat above her head for a hatchet.

"Oh, my hat!" cried Helen, making a wild dive for it. Puppums thought it was all a game for his special benefit, and dived after them--and the meeting broke up in disorder. But not before the girls had decided to *be* a Camp Fire, and made Mrs. Bryan promise to act as their Guardian.

Winnie, after the girls had gone, returned alone to the fire, and sat down by it, thinking over the things she had been hearing.

"It's going to be heaps of fun," was the first thing she thought, and then, "It's going to take lots of time!"

Then she got up and shook herself. "Anyway, I love it!" she decided. Then she put the lights out and went to bed.

Helen Bryan was over early next morning.

"Oh, Winnie!" she called up to her friend's window.

"Come on up!" called Winnie back. "I've just had my bath, but I haven't finished dressing."

Helen came in by the open back door, spoke to Mrs. Merriam, who was getting breakfast, and tore up the stairs to Winnie's room.

"Oh, there's such heaps to tell!" she announced before she was well inside the room. "Rings and bands and dresses and ceremonies and--everything! Only we will have to take more girls in. You have to have at least seven to start with."

Helen stopped for lack of breath, and dropped on the bed. Winnie, who was doing her hair before the mirror, turned around.

"It's like the Boy Scouts, only it's girls," she decided thoughtfully. "Helen, I don't see why we can't have just as good times as they do. Tom's always telling about the glorious times his patrol had last summer, camping up near Wampoag. I don't see why we shouldn't go camping, too, and have heaps of fun!"

"Why, of course we can!" agreed Helen. "None of your mothers will mind if Nannie goes along, and she'll have to if she's Guardian."

"Come on down and have breakfast with us," invited Winnie, straightening up from her last shoe-lace. "You haven't told me half the things there are to tell."

"Well, I've had breakfast," said Helen, "but----"

"Oh, you can eat some more," insisted Winnie. "We're going to have flapjacks and maple syrup."

"Well, all right," said Helen, weakening. Flapjacks and maple syrup did sound good. So they went down together to the breakfast table.

Winnie's family, her father and mother and her 13 brother Tom, and eight-year-old Florence, had to be told all about it.

"Can't I be a Fire Camp Girl, too?" demanded Florence on the spot.

"I don't know yet," said Helen. "We'll have to find out."

"I will be, whether you find out or not," said Florence, who was a determined young person, and something of a tagger.

"Well, thank goodness, to-day's Saturday," and Winnie changed the subject cheerfully. "We have all day to find out in, and there's scarcely any home-work to do. Have you any, Helen?"

"Only a little history," said Helen, "and I can do that to-night."

"Such heaps of good times coming!" sang Winnie rapturously as she sprang up from the table, to get a fresh supply of flapjacks.

"If you have as good a time as the Scouts do you'll have fun, all right," said Tom. "But I don't see how you can--just girls!"

Helen laughed, but his sister flew up.

"We can, and better, too," she flashed. "Just you wait and see!"

"Seeing's believing," said Tom mischievously, passing his plate for the flapjacks as Winnie brought in the heaping plate that had been keeping hot in the oven.

"That's true," said his father gravely, putting a pile of buttered quarter-sections on his son's plate. "At 14 least, nobody who hadn't seen it would believe you could eat so many flapjacks and not explode!"

Everyone laughed; but Tom calmly went on eating.

"They're awfully good, mother," he said. "I'll tell you, Winnie, if you could learn to make as good flapjacks as mother with your Fire Camping, as Florence calls it, you'd be doing something worth while."

"Oh, I don't suppose there's anything about flapjacks in it--do you think there could be, Helen?" asked Winnie.

Mrs. Merriam laughed a little.

"Well, do you know, my dears," she said, "I have a strange feeling that there *is*!"

"I don't see how," doubted Winona. "But maybe, if I get time, Tom, I'll learn how to make them. Come on, Helen, let's go back to Nannie and ask her all the questions we can think of."

The two girls ran out hand-in-hand.

"Are there flapjacks in it, mother?" asked little Florence.

Mrs. Merriam laughed again as she began to clear the table.

"There are, and a great deal besides, or I'm much mistaken, dear!"



## 15CHAPTER TWO

Within the next week Mrs. Bryan had sent for and filled out and returned the application blanks, and now the girls were merely waiting for the return of the blanks and their charter. Meanwhile, out of school hours, Winnie helped her mother about the house.

"I mayn't have time for much housework when I belong to the Camp Fire," she thought, "and I'd better do all I can now."

So she learned a good deal about cooking, and helped regularly with the dishes--and with the supper-getting and tidying. Finally--it was almost the end of May by then--the charter came, and material for the ceremonial dresses, and various other things; and the girls held their first Camp Fire. It was at Winnie's house, with its big fireplace, that they had it. Mrs. Bryan invited two other girls to join, to make up the number; Dorothy Gray and Adelaide Hughes. Dorothy the girls all knew and liked--she was everybody's choice for one of the vacant places--but nobody knew much about Adelaide, who was a newcomer in town, except that she had no mother, and lived with her father and her younger brother and little sister in one of the few apartment-houses that were beginning to be put up in the little town where the girls all lived. She was a quiet, rather sullen girl, and she dressed badly--almost untidily. The girls were surprised at her joining, for she seemed to keep away from people almost as if she did it on purpose. But Mrs. Bryan wanted her in, and the girls would any of them have done anything for Mrs. Bryan. Only they confided to each other that they hoped Adelaide wouldn't spoil the fun.

As each girl came, the night of the first meeting, she was taken, not into the living-room, but to a little room beside it, and asked to wait there for the rest. Edith Hillis was the last to come, and then they were summoned into the other room. It was lighted only by the blaze of the fire.

Helen explained things to the girls, as her step-mother had explained to her.

"When the drum begins to beat we are to come in, Indian file," she reminded them, as a soft, measured beat began to be heard in the next room.

Putting herself at the head of the line, she led the seven girls into the room to the rhythmic beating. They circled around it once, then sat down in a ring about the fireplace, and looked at Mrs. Bryan with admiration.

She had on a straight brownish gown, with deep fringes at its bottom. She sat on the floor by a curious drum, of a sort most of them had never even seen pictures of. She was beating it softly, Indian fashion, with her closed fist.

"Welcome," she spoke clearly, rising as the girls came to a halt around her. "Have you come desiring to make a Camp Fire and tend it?"

"Yes," answered all the girls. It was then that they dropped into their places, in a semi-circle around the fire and their Guardian. 17

Then each of the girls, in turn, rose and repeated her wish to become a Camp Fire Girl, and follow the Law of the Fire. When they had all finished Mrs. Bryan leaned back in her corner, and talked to them about the Law--what each of the seven parts of it meant.

"Why--it covers everything!" said Winnie.

"It certainly does!" seconded Louise. "All I have to do, it seems to me, is to go on living, and I'll acquire unnumbered honor beads."

"You may think so," Helen warned her, "but you'll find there's plenty to learn about it. I've been studying it out."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Louise airily. She caught up the manual as she spoke, and ran her eye down the list of honors by the firelight. "Wash and iron a shirtwaist--I love to wash things. Make a bed for two months--I'd be hung with beads if I had one for every two months I've made my bed. Abstain from gum, candy, ice-cream--oh, good gracious!"

"That counts as much as the rest," said Winnie mischievously, "and think how good it will be for you!"

"I'll get thin," Louise remarked thoughtfully. "What are you going to start with, Winnie?"

"Health-craft, I think." Winona had taken the book in her turn, and was looking through the pages. "I've always wanted to learn horseback riding, and I think perhaps father'll let me, now it's in a book as something you ought to do." Then she remembered what her brother had said about the flapjacks, and she shook her head as she passed on the book. "No," she corrected herself, "I don't believe that will be the first thing I'll do. I think I need home-craft quite as much as I do learning to ride."

"What about you, Helen?" asked Louise.

"Why, clay-modelling and brass-work, or things like that," was the prompt answer. "I want to take up art-craft when I get older, and I might as well begin."

"Can you clay-model in camp?" asked Louise.

"Just as well as you can make a shirtwaist," replied Helen, unruffled.

"I like the hand-crafts, too," said Edith Hillis. "I think I shall specialize on fancy-work."

"Always a perfect lady!" teased Louise, who was something of a tomboy, and frankly thought it was silly of Edith to refuse to get her hair wet in the swimming-pool, and wear veils for her complexion.

The other three girls, Marie Hunter and Dorothy Gray and Adelaide Hughes, did not say what honors they were going to work for. Everybody was pretty sure that Marie was going to write a play, and Dorothy did beautiful needle-work. But as for Adelaide, silent in her place, nobody could guess.

"You mustn't any of you forget that there's sewing to do, right now," warned Mrs. Bryan. "And I want all of you to look at my dress, because each of you will have to make one like it."

She stood up again, and they all examined the straight khaki dress with its leather fringes. 19

"That won't be especially hard to make," concluded Marie, who did most of her own sewing. "There's a pattern, isn't there, Mrs. Bryan?"

"Oh, yes, and I have it. And there's one more thing, girls--two, rather. We must each choose a name, and a symbol to go with the name. Then we have to name the Camp Fire."

"A name--how do you mean?" asked Winnie.

"I mean that, of course, our Camp Fire has to be called something. Beside that, so does each Camp Fire Girl. I like birds and bird-study, so I am going to call myself 'Opeechee,' the Robin, and take a pair of spread wings for my symbol. It's to put on one's personal belongings like a crest--see? as I have it on this pillow-top."

The girls clustered around her to see the symbol, stencilled on the pillow-cover on her lap. She told them she was going to burn it on her shirtwaist box as well, and showed them where she had woven it into her headband, a gorgeous thing of brown and orange-red beads.

"It would go on a paddle-blade, too," said Helen thoughtfully.

"It shall on mine to-morrow," declared Marie. "That is, if I've thought of a symbol by then," she added prudently.

"I think this new name idea is perfectly gorgeous!" cried Louise enthusiastically. "I've always hated my name--you'd expect a Louise to be tall and severe and haughty--and look at *me!*" 20

She jumped up in the firelight and spread out her plump arms tragically.

"We see you!" nodded Helen calmly, and Louise sat down again.

"You'll be glad you have red hair when you're grown up," consoled Edith. "It's supposed to be very beautiful."

"Well, it *isn't*," said Louise energetically, "with people always asking after the white horse. I wonder why red-haired girls and white horses are supposed to go together?"

But nobody could tell her. They were all clustered about Mrs. Bryan and the manual, choosing names, and planning symbols, and you couldn't hear yourself think. Winnie and Helen and Mrs. Bryan had planned to finish the evening by

playing games, but all the girls were so busy talking that it was impossible to get a game in edgewise.

Presently Mrs. Merriam and little Florence came in with cocoa and sandwiches. And then, at about ten-thirty, the meeting broke up, after planning a bacon-bat for the next Saturday.

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Winnie Merriam sat, as she loved to sit, by the dying fire. Her mother began to clear away the dishes, but Winnie stopped her with:

"Please wait a little while, and talk to me, mother. I haven't had half enough sandwiches, and besides, the nicest part of a party is talking it over afterwards."

"Very well," said Mrs. Merriam, sitting down 21 across from her daughter and helping herself to something to eat. "I didn't get much chance at the refreshments either, I was so busy helping you serve them. What was it you wanted to say particularly, dear?"

"I wanted to ask you about my name, mother. I wasn't christened 'Winnie,' was I?"

"Why, no, dear--you know that. You were christened 'Winona,' after your grandmother--only somehow, we never called you that."

"It's a real Indian name, isn't it?" asked Winnie.

"It certainly is," her mother assured her. "Why, dear, I've told you the story of it many a time."

"Not for a long time now," persuaded her daughter. "I think I've forgotten some of it. Didn't a real Indian give it to grandmother?"

"The Indian didn't exactly give it to her, it belonged to the Indian's baby."

"Oh, tell me the story!" urged Florence sleepily. "I want to hear, too!"

Mrs. Merriam made room for Florence in her lap, and went on above her with the sandwich and the story.

"Your great-grandfather was an Indian missionary, and when he and your Great-grandmother Martin went out to live among the Indians, they took with them their little baby daughter, so young they had not named her yet. Well, one day, while your grandmother was sitting on the steps of the log house where they lived with her baby on her lap, a squaw came along with *her* baby. She had it strapped to her back, the way they carry them, you know. She was a stranger, 22 not one of the mission Indians, and oh, so tired and ragged and dusty!

"Great-grandmother Martin couldn't understand her language, but she beckoned her into the house and gave her food for herself and milk for the baby. And then, by signs, she asked the baby's name. And the Indian woman said 'Winona--papoose Winona--yes.' It seemed she could speak a very little English. So then Great-grandmother Martin asked the woman what the name meant--for all Indian names have meanings, you know. But the woman hadn't enough English words to answer her. So she got up from the floor where she had been sitting and took the bright steel bread-knife that lay where great-grandmother had been cutting bread for her. She held it in a ray of sunlight that crossed the room, and shook it so the light flashed and was reflected, bright and quivering, in the room.

"That Winona!" she explained.

"After she was rested she wouldn't stay. She went on her travels, wherever she was going,--great-grandmother never saw her again. But she didn't forget the name, and as soon as she could she asked the Indian interpreter what 'Winona' really meant. He told her that it was the name of another tribe for 'ray of light that sparkles,' or 'flashing ray of light.'

"So Great-grandmother Martin named her own little girl Winona. The name was pretty, and the meaning was prettier still. And she grew up and married Grandfather Merriam--and when you came we named you for her." 23

"Then it really is a sure-enough Indian name," said its owner. "And the meaning is lovely. 'A ray of flashing light'--you couldn't ask to be anything better than that, could you, mother? I believe if I can I shall keep my own name for the Camp Fire. It is prettier than anything I could make up or find."

"It certainly is," said her mother.

"Why didn't I have a Nindian name, too?" clamored Florence aggrievedly, sitting up and rubbing her eyes.

"Because your other grandmother didn't," said her mother, kissing her. "One Indian maiden in a family is enough. What names have the other girls chosen, Winnie?"

Winona began to laugh.

"Louise says she is going to call herself 'Ishkoodah'--don't you remember, in Hiawatha, 'Ishkoodah, the Comet--Ishkoodah, with fiery tresses?' she says she thinks she can make a lovely symbol out of it. It's funny, but Louise is always doing funny things. I think she's really in earnest about this. And Helen says she's going to call herself 'Night-Star.' We don't know the Indian for that yet, but we're going to hunt it up at the library. She thinks she will specialize on astronomy--learn what the constellations are, you know. I'd like to do that, too. All I know is the Big Dipper, and that the slanty W set up sidewise is Cassiopea's Chair. I learned that from the little Storyland of Stars you gave me when I was seven." 24

"I want to know chairs, too," said Florence drowsily.

"All right, dear, you shall," soothed Winona. Then she went on talking to her mother.

"So all the girls said they'd take sky names, and we decided to call our camp by the Indian name for the sky, because we want to camp out as much as we can."

"I think that is a good idea," said Mrs. Merriam.

"It was mine," said Winona. "But Mrs. Bryan remembered an Indian name for it--Karonya. We're Camp Karonya--isn't that pretty? And then Marie remembered the Indian name for South-Wind, one of them, Shawondassee, and took it. But the rest couldn't think of Indian names, so we waited to hunt some."

"Do the names have to be Indian?"

"Oh, no," Winnie answered sleepily, "but it's better."

"Come!" said her mother, setting Florence, who was fast asleep, on her feet. "We'd all better go to bed, or we'll be too sleepy to go to church to-morrow."

"And the sooner I go to sleep the sooner next Saturday will come, as you used to say when I was a little girl," added Winona. "Oh, I can scarcely wait to find out what a bacon-bat really is on its native heath--or anywhere, for that matter."

"Didn't they tell you what it was?"

"No--Marie is planning it, and she wouldn't say, except that it would be heaps of fun, and I was to bring a dozen rolls and some salt and a jack-knife. I'll have to borrow Tom's. Good-night, mother dear."

## 25 CHAPTER THREE

"Have you got everything, Winnie?" asked Helen anxiously, as they met half-way between Winnie's gate and Helen's, about ten o'clock on Saturday morning.

"I think so," answered Helen a little uncertainly. "Marie told me to bring a pound of bacon--that's all. What are you bringing?"

"Two dozen humble, necessary rolls," said Winnie, "and salt. I had to buy a knife, because Tom lost his yesterday. He loses it regularly, once a week."

"Pity he picked out to-day," commented Helen as they fell into step. "Do you suppose we'll be late?"

"Mercy, no!" said Winnie, "We're more likely to be the first!"

"We won't be"--and Helen laughed--"Louise is always the earliest everywhere. She says she's lost more perfectly good time being punctual than any other way she knows."

"Well, we'll be ahead of Edith, anyway," Winnie remarked cheerfully. She adjusted the two dozen rolls more easily, for that many rolls, when you have far to carry them, have a way of feeling lumpy.

"It's a good thing it isn't far to the trolley!" said Helen. "I didn't know how nubbly this bacon was going to be."

"So are my rolls! Let's trade," suggested Winnie brilliantly.

"Almost human intelligence!" giped Helen; so they traded, and each found her load much more comfortable than the one she'd had before--which says a good deal for the powers of imagination.

"Don't let's sit up on the benches of that trolley-station--they're the most uncomfortable things in town!" objected Winnie. "Come on, Helen. Let's be real sports, and sit on the grass."

"I do believe we're the first!" was Helen's sole reply, as she eyed the little trolley-station worriedly.

"Oh, we *can't* be," said Winnie confidently, "unless Louise has died or gone West. If she's in the land of the living I know she's here. Once I asked the crowd over in the afternoon to make fudge, and she got there just as I was in the middle of sweeping out the kitchen, at one o'clock!"

"You never told me about that!" reminded Helen interestedly. "What did you do?"

Winona laughed. "Do! I didn't have to do anything. Louise did the doing--she took the broom out of my hands, and sent me flying upstairs to dress, and did the sweeping herself! Oh, and there she is! Lou-i-ise!"

"Here I am!" Louise answered placidly, rising up in her white blouse from the very centre of the field by the station, and looking, with the sun shining on her brilliant hair, like a large white blossom with a red centre. "I got here long ago. Come on over here on the grass. It's horrid on the benches, and I'm making friends with the nicest little brown hoptoad." 27

"Ugh--no!" shuddered Helen, who did not care for hoptoads. "Here's Nannie, with Adelaide and Dorothy."

So the girls ran over to meet their Guardian, and the hoptoad was averted. Just behind the newcomers arrived Marie and Edith, Marie dignified and neat, as usual, in her dark-blue sailor-suit, and Edith in a fluffy pink dress that did not look as if it could stand much strenuous picnicking.

"Did you bring the rolls, Winnie?" called Marie.

"Certainly I did, and Helen has the bacon."

"And I have the hard-boiled eggs," said Louise gayly, "and here is the trolley--it sounds like a French lesson. We mount the trolley that we may go to the picnic. Come on, girls."

The girls were bound for a little wood, five miles out, where nearly everybody that went on picnics had them. They sat down on a rear seat in a giggling row, while Marie went ruthlessly on counting supplies.

"Adelaide, did you bring condensed cream? And who was to bring cake--were you, Edith? Dorothy has knives and forks and a kettle."

"Cake?" from Edith blankly. "Why, no, Marie, I brought eggs. I thought you said to--I thought we were going to fry them with the bacon."

A howl of laughter went up, in which Edith joined in spite of herself.

"How did you think we'd do it, dear?" Mrs. Bryan asked at last, trying to straighten her face.

"That's easy," promised Louise cheerfully. "You just peel the eggs carefully, throw away the shell, poke the raw egg on the point of a stick, and toast it over the fire till it's all gone."

Edith giggled. "Well, I don't see how you could expect me to get it straight over the 'phone, anyway. If I'd known you expected me to bring a cake--I don't believe it was me you--ow!"

For a lurch of the car had sent the satchel in which Dorothy had the knives and forks smashing against the raw eggs they had been talking about; and as Stevenson said of the cow when they asked him the immortal question about the cow meeting the locomotive--it was "so much the worse for the eggs." They broke promptly, and one fatal corner of the bag that held them began to leak on Edith's pretty pink dress.

Dorothy tried to repair damages with her handkerchief, but there was a yellow smear on the front breadth, for all they could do. As it proved afterwards, it was poor Edith's hoodoo day.

"Poor little eggs!" Louise lamented pensively. "Nobody's wasting any sympathy on them--and they're all broken up."

"Oh, what an awful pun!" cried everybody; but Louise went on. She lifted the limp bag gingerly, and looked at it as if she was very sorry for it indeed.

"Let's serenade the eggs, girls!" she said. "Just follow me!"

And the people in the front seats of the trolley heard a hearty chorus of young voices ringing out from the two back seats: 29

Good-bye, little eggs, good-bye--  
Don't cry, little eggs, don't cry;  
Although you break for our sweet sake  
While we're marching away upon a picnic--  
Good-bye, little eggs, good-bye--  
By and bye, little eggs, by and bye  
We'll be eating up our lunch, but we won't have  
you to crunch--  
Good-bye, little eggs, good-bye!

The girls were in fits of laughter by the time they had done singing Louise's doggerel.

"And yet--it really is silly!" said Marie consideringly when they were done.

"Don't insult my beautiful, high-brow pome," said Louise cheerfully, hopping out of the trolley, for they were at their journey's end. "Who's going to fetch water? Don't all speak at once."

"We'll get the water," Edith promised, speaking for herself and Marie. "It won't be as hard on my poor clothes as frying bacon."

So the two of them took the kettle and started off.

The place the girls had chosen for their bacon-bat was a little wood at the end of the trolley-line, which possessed a spring, and an open, sheltered sort of ravine where picnickers were wont to build their fires. The girls sauntered along in ones and twos till they reached this ravine, set down the things they carried, and scattered to look for sticks.

Winnie and Helen, peacefully gathering wood as they went, suddenly heard screams, and dropped their wood and ran toward the sound. 30

"It's--it's near the spring," panted Winona to Helen. "Oh, I do hope nobody's fallen in!"

They arrived at the spring just as Adelaide Hughes and Mrs. Bryan reached it from another direction.

Now the spring was not an untouched, wildwood affair at all. The authorities had done things to it which made its water a great deal better for drinking purposes, but much less picturesque--and deeper. Its bed had been widened and lined with concrete, and barred across at intervals, whether to keep the earth back or the concrete solid nobody but the Town Council that had done it knew. And although falling between the bars didn't seem very easy even for a slim, small girl, Edith seemed to have accomplished it. She was wedged between two of the bars across the water, and what was more, she had managed to drag Marie Hunter down with her in her fall. Marie only had one foot in the water, and she was struggling to get out, though the force of the stream was making it hard for her, for the pool was about four feet deep. But Edith, wedged between the bars, was devoting her energies exclusively to screaming for help. The reason was apparent when the rescuing parties came closer. One arm was caught down beside her, so that she could balance herself, but not get out. Winona took one look at the situation.

"We'll get Edith out!" she called to Mrs. Bryan. "Can you manage Marie?"

Mrs. Bryan was a slender, delicate-looking woman, but she was stronger than Winona realized.

"Certainly!" she encouraged. And Helen and 31 Winona began eagerly trying to extricate their friend.

It was impossible to reach Edith and take her free hand to pull her out by--the bank each side the sluice, or stream, or whatever you choose to call it, was too deep. Winnie thought a minute. Then she took off the long, strong blue silk scarf she wore in a big bow at the neck of her blouse.

"Can I have yours, too, Helen?" And Helen handed hers over promptly. Either alone was long enough, but Winnie wanted the two to twist together, for fear one would not bear Edith's weight.

"Can you get around to the other side with your end, Helen?" she said.

Helen scurried around up back of the source. Then she and Winnie, each holding an end of the scarf-ropes, walked down either side of the stream till they were parallel with Edith. They knelt down and lowered the scarf till Edith could slip her free arm over it, and pull herself up. With its aid as a brace, she managed to free the caught arm, jammed against her side. After that it was easy enough, and in a few minutes she extricated herself entirely, and half dragged, half pulled herself up the steep bank. By the time the girls were done pulling her out she and they were pretty well worn out, and they dropped on the grass, Helen and Edith on one side and Winnie on the other, and took time to find their lost breaths.

Mrs. Bryan and Marie came up to them now--getting Marie out of the water had been a fairly easy matter--and made the others get up. 32

"Edith and Marie must go straight and get off their wet things!" the older woman advised. "And Adelaide's feet are wet, too."

"Where had we better go?" asked Marie, calm as ever, though nobody could have been much wetter than she was up to her waist.

"Old Mary's is the quickest place," said Mrs. Bryan. "Hurry, now--run, or you'll catch cold. Adelaide and I are coming, too."

The whole party--for Winnie and Helen wanted to see the finish--set off at a brisk trot for Old Mary's.

Old Mary was an elderly Irishwoman who earned her living mostly by taking in washing, but also by selling ginger-ale, cookies and sandwiches to such picnics and automobile parties as came her way. Her little house was close to the picnic-woods.

"They're sure of a good fire to change their things by, that's one comfort," said Winnie to Helen as they ran along in the rear of their dripping friends.

"Yes, but----" Helen began to laugh. "What are they going to change to?" she inquired. "We didn't any of us bring our trunks--it isn't done on picnics!"

"They'll have to go to bed!" was Winnie's solution, and they both began to laugh again.

"It's a shame, though, to have them miss all the picnic," said Winnie, sobering down.

But when they arrived on the scene they found the victims hadn't the least intention of going to bed.

"Sure, I'll iron their bits of clothes dry," said Old 33 Mary, "an' who'll be the worse if they borry a few clothes from me ironin' horse till the others are dry? The people that own 'em'd never mind--I've an elegant trade in the washin' of clothes, an' there's plenty to fit yez all on the horse."

It was not half-past eleven yet, and the girls would not be going home for some hours, so there would be plenty of time for the things to dry. So Edith and Marie accepted Old Mary's offer on the spot. Among the various family washes that she was doing were some things of their own. They managed to pick out enough dry clothing for all their needs--all but dresses. There were shirtwaists and blouses galore, but it was too early for many wash-skirts to be going to the laundress.

However, there was an ample red cotton wrapper, the property of Mary herself, which at least covered Marie. But Edith was little, and there was nothing which came near fitting her but an expensively trimmed white organdy party-dress, which Mary said frankly she did not feel she could lend.

"What shall I do?" asked Edith in desperation. "I can't sit here all day till my dress dries!"

"I dunno, darlin'. Sure 'tis too bad. Wait a minute, though." She hurried out of the room, and presently returned waving something blue. "If ye wouldn't mind these overalls, now," she said, "they're just washed an' ironed for little James Dempsey to wear. An' the beauty of overalls is they fit anybody."

"*Overalls!*" said Edith mournfully. 34

But overalls were better than a day in bed, and the end of it was, that out of Old Mary's hospitable cottage walked a tall Irishwoman with two long braids over her trailing red wrapper, and a small Irishman with yellow curls over very baggy and much turned-up overalls, instead of neat Marie and fluffy Edith. They and Adelaide had put on dry stockings, and had many thicknesses of newspaper on their shoes till they could get to the fire to dry them.

"Good-mornin'!" said Marie cheerfully to her astonished friends, as she sailed majestically up to the freshly-made fire.

"Sure we're the world-renowned vaudeville team, Hunter an' Hillis."

"Just back from doing their justly-famous diving stunt!" added Winnie. "Better come near the fire, girls, and try to get your shoes dry."

The fire, which the rest had made during the "diving-stunt," was burning beautifully. The girls laid down waterproofs and blankets, and disposed themselves comfortably around it, for the fire-makers were tired, and the rescuers and rescued were particularly glad to lie down and be warm and dry and limp.

"Two long hours to dinner-time!" from Winnie presently in a very sad voice. "I don't feel as if I could stand it."

"Nor I!" several voices chimed in.

"Then why do you?" suggested Mrs. Bryan sensibly. "If everybody's hungry we might as well have dinner now!"



## 35CHAPTER FOUR

At the mention of dinner everybody became energetic as by magic. Winnie split her two dozen rolls neatly down the middle, and set them in rows on a newspaper, ready for the broiled bacon. Marie, with her red wrapper pinned up out of harm's way, banked the fire, while Edith mixed cocoa and condensed milk industriously in the bottom of a gigantic kettle which was discovered, too late, to have been intended to boil the water in. It occurred to Winnie that Edith in overalls was much more fun than Edith in fluffy ruffles that she had to remember to take care of, as she watched her flying around with her curls waving in the wind, looking like a stage newsboy. Helen, on her knees by the heap of provisions, was unwrapping her bacon, and somebody else was peeling all the hard-boiled eggs.

"Didn't anybody bring cake?" asked Louise plaintively. "Have we nothing but rolls, bacon and eggs?"

"Why, what else do you want?" asked Marie with a dignity rather interfered with by the way her scarlet draperies flapped in the breeze. "All the bacon-bats I ever heard about they just had rolls and bacon—we have a lot of things extra."

"Glad I never attended one of the just-rolls-and-bacon kind," Louise rebelliously declared.

Winnie, who liked cake herself, and thought she had seen some, went back to the heap of provisions and began to dig at it like a small dog at a mole-hill. 36

"Marie!" she called triumphantly in a minute, "There *is* cake! And a lot of bananas!"

"That's good," Marie serenely remarked. "Bring them along."

Winnie reappeared in a minute, very flushed and triumphant, with a hand of bananas under her arm, and a huge chocolate cake, with almost undamaged icing, poised carefully before her.

"Oh, I remember!" said absent-minded Dorothy, "I brought that cake. It was in the satchel with the knives and forks."

"You certainly saved all our lives," said Louise feelingly, and went on whittling toasting-sticks for the bacon. "Here, Winnie, take a stick and start in to be useful."

"How do you do it?" Winnie wondered—"cook bacon, I mean? I never did it this way before."

"Just string it on the stick any way at all," Marie advised, and speared a slice scientifically as she spoke.

"Easy when you know how!" laughed Winnie, sharpening her own stick a little more and threading some bacon on it.

In a few minutes everybody had slices of bacon frizzling gayly, and getting more or less charred. When they were done enough they were popped between the opened rolls, and—eaten, cinders and all. The water, though it was boiled in something else than its own proper kettle—something remarkably like a dish-pan cunningly slung over the fire by a wonderful system of forked sticks—came to a boil without accident, 37 and was poured on the cocoa. Each girl had brought her own drinking-cup, so there was no difficulty about crockery. It seemed to Winnie, balanced on one elbow on her rug, that nothing had ever tasted so good as the bacon sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, washed down by all the hot cocoa you could drink.

By the time the cake and bananas came the girls felt as if they couldn't eat another thing. But they did. It was delightful lying around the fire talking and eating and laughing. It was one of those mild days which come in May sometimes, bright, with a little breeze. After awhile somebody started a Camp Fire song, and one by one they all joined in. After that they lay quiet for awhile, talking and being lazy.

When they began to clear away Edith declared that she didn't dare go near the spring again. So it was Winona and Louise who took the few things there were to wash, the cocoa-kettle and dish-pan and drinking-cups and the silver, over to the spring. It was pleasant, lazy work, not a bit like home dish-washing. Louise splashed the things up and down in the running water, and Winona dried them.

"Isn't it nice?" sighed Winnie. "Oh, I do wish we could camp outdoors all this summer, instead of living in hot houses! Don't you always hate to sleep indoors when it's hot?"

Louise rolled over on her back and looked at the sky.

"Yes, I think I do," she spoke thoughtfully. "You have to, though. Out in California they say everybody 38 has sleeping-porches, and never thinks of going inside at night. I wish people had them here."

A brilliant idea came to Winona--which, by the way, she afterward carried out. "Our side-porch is almost all screened. I wonder if mother wouldn't let me sleep there? I'm going to ask her, anyway."

"I wish I could, too," breathed Louise, "but our side-porch is where everybody goes by--that's the worst of living on a corner. I know I never could break the milkman and the baker of contributing rolls and milk on top of me in the early morning!"

"What a splendid idea! Then you could have 'breakfast in your bed,' like Harry Lauder," said Winnie, and both girls stopped to giggle. "But honestly," began Winnie again, as she reached out for some long grass near her and began to plait it, "don't you think we can all camp out this summer?"

"Here?"

"N-no, not here--at least, I don't believe they'd let us, the people who own it, I mean. But there must be somewhere that we could go, somewhere not too far off to cost a lot to get there."

"I wonder!" said Louise, pulling a thick red pig-tail around in order to nibble its end thoughtfully. She had a habit of gnawing at her hair when she thought hard. "What about Cribb's Creek?"

"That's too near," Winnie opposed.

"Well, where did the Boy Scouts go last year?"

"Up on Wampoag River, a little way below Wampoag," said Winona. "They said it was a cinch, because they 39 could sell all the fish they caught to the Wampoag hotel-keepers, and get things they needed, and yet it was just as wild as it could be if you went a little way along the river."

Wampoag was a summer resort not far from them.

"Well, how far's that?" asked Louise.

"About ten miles to the boys' camp," answered Winona. "But there would be plenty of good camping-ground nearer home, and quite close to that little village--what's its name?"

"Green's Corners," supplied Louise.

"I wonder who Green was, and if he really *did* have corners," Winona thoughtfully remarked.

Louise giggled. "He was a square man, I suppose," she said, and Winnie gave her a shove. "Oh, don't!" she said. "That's an awful pun."

"I thought it was a very good one. Well, to come back to business, the boys didn't go by train. Indeed, I don't think you can, unless you go away round. They hiked."

"Well, why shouldn't we, too?" asked Louise.

"Or part of the way, anyway!" added Winnie,

"People would take us for a band of 'I won't works!' We'd look it, too, by the time we got to the end of the journey."

"But we needn't do it all at once," said Winnie. "We could break the journey overnight. Don't you know, people in England have walking-tours that last for days and days? I've read about it. They stop in inns overnight and have adventures." 40

"Well, I'd like the adventures, if they didn't mean falling into ponds and getting your clothes wet," said Louise.

Winnie yawned.

"I suppose they think we've tied the cups round our necks and jumped in," and she lazily started to get up. "Come on, Louise, let's find Mrs. Bryan and ask her about camping. She's sure to know about hikes and everything."

Finding Mrs. Bryan proved to be hard, because she was not in the kind of a place where you would expect to find a grown-up step-mother. They finally discovered her by a flutter of blue skirt that hung down below the branches of an old apple-tree. She was sitting comfortably in one of its crotches, trying to carve herself a willow whistle.

"Come on up, girls!" she hailed them cheerfully. "There's always room at the top!"

"Where are the rest of them?" asked Winnie, beginning to climb. Louise followed more slowly, for Winnie was more slender and quicker in her movements.

"Scattered all over, I suppose," said Mrs. Bryan. "Edith went back to old Mary's to see if her clothes were dry. Did you want them for anything special?"

"No indeed," Winnie assured her. "It was you we wanted for something special."

"Well, I'm here," and Mrs. Bryan dropped an affectionate hand on the pretty brown head beneath her. "What is it, dear?" 41

"It's about camping out," spoke Winnie and Louise in a breath. "Do you think we can do it?"

Mrs. Bryan laughed.

"Can we do it? Why, my dears, that's just what we're for! What would be the fun of belonging to a Camp Fire if we couldn't go camping outdoors?"

"Oh, lovely!" cried Winnie. "Then you'll go, too?"

"I certainly will!" said Mrs. Bryan promptly. "It would have to be when Mr. Bryan was having his vacation, though, because it would never do to leave, not only my own hearth-fire, but my own poor helpless husband, untended. And, of course, it will not be till school is through."

"Oh, oh, it begins to sound almost real!" Winnie cried with a joyous little jounce that shook several pink blossoms from the tree.

"Just wait!" warned Louise from her lower limb. "When we start that twenty-five-mile hike, it will seem quite too real for comfort, take my word for it!"

"Don't you think we could hike to camp?" appealed Winnie.

"You'll have to practise shorter hikes first," was the answer. "If you do that there's no reason why we couldn't all walk the distance. I suppose we'll camp somewhere on the Wampoag River."

"Yes, that's what we thought," said the girls.

"Of course, we'd have to break the journey," Winnie went on.

"Well, yes, I think so," Mrs. Bryan answered. "Oh, here are Helen and Marie now. Oh, Helen! 42 We're up in this tree! No, don't come up--all the seats are full!"

"Then come down!" called Helen. "We have something to show you."

The something proved to be a small and very scared garter-snake, that Helen was carrying in a forked stick.

"Poor little snakelet!" said Louise. "Do let him go home, Helen--I'm sure he's not grown-up yet."

So Helen put down the snake and off he went.

"Did you find your clothes?" Louise asked Marie rather superfluously, for she had on her sailor-suit, rather fresher-looking than it had been before.

"It was all done when we got there," said Marie, "but Edith's dress was harder to do--all those ruffles, you know--so Mary's still ironing it."

"Then we'd better sit here and wait for her," suggested Louise. "And oh, girls, we have a plan."

"A real plan, all hand-made?" mocked Helen. "Do tell us about it."

So then the camping-trip was discussed and votes taken about it. Helen, of course, could go. Marie was sure she would be allowed to.

"Mother says I stay in the house and read too much anyway," she said.

The other girls, drifting up one by one, were all wild over the idea. Edith, in her freshly-laundered frock, was a little doubtful about the hike, but as she said, if she fainted from exhaustion she could take a train or a carriage or something the rest of the way.

They talked camping till it was time to go back and 43 pack up things for the return trip. So the girls rose up from around the apple-tree, and stowed everything away in the baskets and satchels they had brought, and walked back to the trolley. First, though, they gave old Mary all the provisions they had left; cocoa, six rolls, and a generous half of the chocolate cake.

"That certainly was a life-sized cake!" breathed Winnie as she set it on Mary's kitchen table. "But it won't be as hard to eat as it was to carry, will it?"

"Sure ye needn't worry but what it'll get et," laughed Mary. "Many thanks, an' good luck to yez all."

They piled into the trolley, rather sleepy with the long day in the wind, and, except for Marie and Edith, rather crumpled. Winnie's blouse had a grass-stain, and Louise's was marked neatly across the back, like a Japanese stencil, with a wet brown bough-mark. There were also burrs, more or less, on everybody. But what were burrs?

Everybody heaved a sigh of contentment as they settled down in their seats.

"It certainly was a lovely picnic!" they said.

"How beautifully fresh and clean Edith Hillis keeps her dresses!" said Mrs. Merriam to Winnie, as Edith turned to wave good-bye at the Merriam gate, and went down the street with Marie and Helen. "You'd think that pink dress had just been washed and ironed, and yet she's been out in the woods with the rest of you tousled-looking children all day!"

And Winona laughed so that it was at least two minutes before she could explain.

## 44CHAPTER FIVE

"I'd advise you girls to hurry up with those squaw dresses," hinted Tom Merriam darkly, as he fled through the sitting-room on his way back from Scout-practice.

Winnie looked up. She and Helen and Louise were sitting in a row on the window-seat, sewing for dear life on their ceremonial gowns.

"We are hurrying all we can," she smiled. "These have to be done by to-night anyway."

"They are, nearly," chimed in Louise, shaking out her garment and observing its fringes with satisfaction. "What's he talking about, Win?"

"Tommy! Tom! Come back and tell us!" called his sister.

"Can't!" shouted Tom down the stairs. "You'll find out in time--you're going to need 'em, that's all!"

"What on earth do you suppose he means?" wondered Helen, as the last glimpse of Tom's khaki-clad form vanished up the stairs.

Winnie laughed as she finished off a seam.

"I don't believe it meant anything," she said. "Tom's always trying to get up excitements."

"I think it means something!" said Louise, beginning to take out bastings. She was the best seamstress of the three, and consequently was done first. "Here, Helen, let me finish that sleeve for you while you do the other one." 45

She took up the sleeve, and jumped up and began to dance with the sleeve for a partner.

Something's goin' to happen, honey,  
Happen, honey, happen mighty soon!

"Oh, thank you!" said Helen gratefully, referring not to the song and dance, but to the aid. She hated sewing, and nothing but the Camp Fire requirements would ever have made her persevere till her gown was done. Winnie did not mind sewing one way or the other, and by a queer contradiction harum-scarum Louise loved it.

The girls worked on, and discussed on. Winnie was sure Tom meant nothing, and the others were just as sure that he had some reason for saying what he had.

That night the girls were to hold their first Council Fire. That was why they were hurrying so to finish their dresses.

When it came Winnie's turn to answer the roll-call, she rose, slim and graceful in her khaki dress, before her turn was reached.

"Opeechee, Guardian of the Fire, may I speak before my turn comes to answer to my name?" she asked.

"Speak," said Mrs. Bryan.

"Opeechee, I do not want to change my name. May I not be known in the Camp Fire as Winona? The name is one that an Indian gave one of my own people many circles of moons ago, and it is mine by inheritance." 46

"Will you tell the Camp Fire about it?" asked Mrs. Bryan.

So Winnie told the Camp Fire the story her mother had told her, of the weary Indian woman her grandmother had helped, and whose papoose had been called "Winona," "Flashing Ray of Light."

"Could anything be better than to be a ray of light in dark places?" asked Winona. "I like the meaning of my name, and if the Camp Fire will let me keep it I promise to be a brightness wherever I can, always, that will light the dark places for people who need it."

"What do you say, Daughters of the Camp Fire?" asked Mrs. Bryan when Winona was done.

"If we all have different Camp Fire names, won't it seem strange for Winona to have the same name straight through?" objected Marie. "It is a beautiful name with a beautiful meaning, if it weren't that it is her every-day name."

"Nobody ever calls me anything but Winnie," said Winona.

"Why not use the translation?" suggested Helen. "'Ray of Light' is pretty. And then Winnie could keep the meaning."

"You have spoken well!" said Mrs. Bryan. "What do you say to that, Daughters of the Camp Fire?"

"Good!" from all the girls.

"Kolah, Ray of Light!" spoke Mrs. Bryan.

Then she went on with the business of the evening.

"Two of our Camp Fire Girls are to become Wood-gatherers to-night. Will they rise?" 47

Winona and Marie had qualified, and they stood up.

"Ray of Light," Mrs. Bryan went on, "will you tell us how you chose your name?"

"'Flashing Ray of Light' is the name my fathers gave me," clearly spoke Winona, "and I have told the Camp Fire the reason of its choosing. But I keep it because I intend to carry out its meaning. I have tried to earn my right to it by being bright, and helping all I could, no matter how dark the days were, nor how much nicer it would have been to be cross. As my symbol I have chosen the firefly, because it lights dark places."

"'Flashing Ray of Light brings brightness to our Camp Fire," said the Guardian. "We welcome you to your place in our Camp Fire Circle."

She gave Winona her pretty silver ring with its raying fagots, and repeating the formula which went with it.

When the girls had welcomed her rank and sung her a cheer, Winona sat down, she hoped, for the last time.

"How does it feel?" whispered Louise, who sat next her. "I wish I'd collected my requirements as quickly."

"It feels partly awfully proud and partly awfully relieved," Winona whispered back. "And I feel as if I oughtn't to have picked out such awfully easy honors to take. Anybody could make a shirtwaist and know about their ancestors and trim a hat----"

"No, they couldn't!" contradicted Louise, who 48 admired Winona very much. "You just happen to be cleverer than the rest of us, that's all."

"I'm *not*!" said Winona as vehemently as it could be said in a whisper. "Marie's getting her Wood-gatherer's ring to-night, too."

Mrs. Bryan's voice rose again in the same formula.

"Shawondassee, tell us how you chose your name."

"Shawondassee means 'South Wind,'" answered Marie's steady voice. "I chose the name because the South Wind coaxes instead of scolding, and I thought it was a good name to remind me to do the same thing. As my symbol I have chosen the willow shoots, because they come up year after year, no matter how often they are cut down, and I wish to have their perseverance."

"Perseverance and cheerfulness!" whispered Louise. "Who would have thought Marie needed either of them?"

"You can't tell much about Marie, because you never can get to her to talk about herself," answered Winona. "But she certainly is one of the hardest workers in the class at school."

At this point the girls had to stop talking, to join in the Wood-gatherer's verses for Marie.

Nearly all Marie's required honors were Patriotism, for she was the student of the crowd.

"It fairly makes me shiver to think how much that girl knows," whispered Louise. "My honors are going to be plain home-craft--making pies and chaperoning ice-chests and massaging floors, and so forth."

"Will your mother let you?" asked Winona; for 49 Mrs. Lane kept two maids, having the money to do it, and a big family.

"Let me!" exploded Louise. "She'll weep tears of joy if there's any prospect of my getting thinner!"

Just as Louise spoke there fell one of those uncanny silences which have a way of occurring at the worst possible times. Louise's statement pealed cheerfully through the room, and poor Louise, blushing scarlet, tried to make herself very small--a hard matter.

The girls could not help laughing, but Mrs. Bryan had mercy on her embarrassment, and went on with the awarding of the honor beads each girl had won since the last meeting. Winona's were rather various--a few from each class. Helen's were nearly all hand-craft--stencilling and clay-modelling. She had brought along a bureau-scarf she had done, to show, and a beautiful little bowl she had modelled and painted and fired. Louise had only three beads so far, one for identifying birds, one for preserving, and one for making her ceremonial dress.

Edith Hillis, to everybody's surprise, was given an honor for folk-dancing, and proceeded, when she was asked, to get up and demonstrate. This held up the regular course of the meeting for quite a little while, because when she showed them the Highland Fling all the girls wanted to learn it. So for at least a half-hour they practised it, till the floor over Mr. Bryan's head, in his study beneath, must have seemed to be coming down.

After they had all tired themselves thoroughly they sang for awhile. About midway of the second song Mrs. Bryan evidently remembered something, for she gave a start as if she were going to speak. As soon as they had finished she raised her hand for silence, and said:

"I have a message for Camp Karonya. It should be delivered at the business meeting, I suppose, but--it won't keep till then. The Boy Scouts, Camp No. Six, of this town, invite the Camp Fire Girls to a dance given by them in the school-house assembly-room next Wednesday night."

"Oh, how perfectly lovely!" cried Edith. "Of course we'll go!"

A confused noise of voices broke out, all speaking at once. You could catch an occasional word--"blue messaline," "white organdy," "orchestra," "how perfectly dandy!"--but for the most part it was just a noise.

Mrs. Bryan waited placidly till it had quieted down.

"What is your pleasure in this matter, Daughters of the Camp Fire?" she asked then.

"Oh, we'll go!" cried everybody at once.

"Then you'd better instruct the Secretary to write them to that effect," suggested Mrs. Bryan gravely, for the tumult seemed inclined to break out again.

Winona jumped up and put it in the form of a motion that the Secretary should reply, and actually induced the girls to second and ratify it.

"I'll write the acceptance right away!" declared Helen with enthusiasm. 51

She went into the next room, got paper and ink, came back, sat down in the middle of a ring of interested suggesters, and wrote a very pleased acceptance.

Winona, robbed of her usual confidante, turned to the girl on her other side, to talk clothes.

"I'm going to wear my blue organdy, with the Dresden sash and hair-ribbons," she said without looking to see to whom she was talking.

"Are you?" said the other girl, hesitating a little.

Winona looked at her, at the sound of her voice. She had thought she was speaking to Louise. But Louise was on the other side of the room, and the girl next her was Adelaide Hughes, one of the two girls Mrs. Bryan had brought into their Camp Fire.

It was two months now since Winona and Adelaide had begun to meet each other weekly at the Camp Fire good times and Ceremonials, but when you have all the bosom friends you want it is hard to see such a very great deal of other people. Winona realized now that she had scarcely exchanged two consecutive sentences with Adelaide all the time she had known her.

Adelaide was a thin, tired-looking girl of about thirteen, with big blue eyes and a sensitive mouth, and hair that had curious yellow and brown lights. She did not join very heartily, ever, in the frolics, but she seemed to enjoy everything with a sort of shy, watching intensity.

"And what are you going to wear?" Winona asked, more out of friendliness than curiosity.

Adelaide colored. 52

"I--I don't know," she said. "I--a white dress, I think."

"White?" asked Winona.

Adelaide shook her head.

"No, lawn--if I come. But maybe I won't be there."

"Why, what a shame!" said Winona with the bright friendliness that was a part of her. "Of course you must be there. Helen accepted for all of us."

"I know, but--but maybe I can't come," repeated Adelaide.

"Of course you can!" insisted Winona.

Adelaide's eyes filled with tears, and she shook her head.

Winona slipped one arm around her. The two girls were sitting a little apart from the rest by now, in a dusky corner.

"There's some reason why you think you can't, some horrid reason," she coaxed. "Now, just tell Winona what it is." She spoke as if she were petting her own younger sister, though Adelaide was only a year younger than she was.

Adelaide's eyes overflowed, and she felt gropingly for her handkerchief, to dry her eyes.

"Here's one," whispered Winona, slipping her own into Adelaide's hand. "Now, tell me, dear. It isn't very bad, is it? Maybe I could help."

"You *can't*!" said Adelaide fiercely, "and I won't tell you a thing unless you promise not to."

"All right," said Winona cheerfully, "I promise." 53

"I--I haven't any party dress, and father can't afford to get me one," choked Adelaide, "and all I have is an old white lawn I wear afternoons, and it's *horrid*. And--and, Winona Merriam, if you offer to loan me a dress I'll never speak to you again!"

"I wasn't going to," comforted Winona, stroking poor sobbing Adelaide's shoulder, while her own quick, friendly mind cast about for a way out.

For Adelaide must come to the dance, and evidently she wouldn't borrow anything from anybody.

"Not borrow--how queer!" said Winona, voicing her thought. "Why, I don't know any of the girls I wouldn't borrow from, if I needed to, or they from me. Don't you ever borrow anything, Adelaide--except trouble?"

"No, I don't," said Adelaide chokily but proudly. "It's--it's different when you *have* to!"

"I don't see why!" said sunny, friendly-hearted Winona, who always took it for granted that she liked people, and of course that they would like her! She had never known what it was to be rich, but never either what it was to be painfully poor. "Well, let's think of some other way. I suppose you haven't time to earn the money for a dress for this party. Opeechee was telling us last week that we ought to try to earn so much money apiece, and that there were lots of



ways for doing it."

"No, there wouldn't be time," answered Adelaide mournfully; but she stopped crying and began to look interested.

## 54 CHAPTER SIX

The two girls sat and thought hard for a moment; then Winnie suddenly thought of something.

"Just a minute, Adelaide!" she whispered, and she went over to the corner where Mrs. Bryan and Marie Hunter were discussing business together. The rest were still all talking dance excitedly by the fireplace.

"Opeechee," she said, "may I ask you something? Would there be any reason why the girls couldn't wear their ceremonial dresses to the dance?"

Mrs. Bryan thought for a moment.

"There's no actual reason why we shouldn't," she said. "Only the idea is that the dresses should be kept for rather intimate and private things."

"But it would be such a good idea if we wore them," insisted Winona eagerly. "You see, perhaps--perhaps some of us mightn't be able to afford new party dresses, and maybe we mightn't have any old good ones, either."

"Why, Winnie, you have that blue----" began Marie, and checked herself as she saw a light.

"Some of us mightn't have any new party dresses," repeated Winona obstinately, but with an appealing look at Mrs. Bryan. She did so hope she would understand! "Anyway, the boys expect us to," she went on eagerly. "Tom said this afternoon that we'd better get the dresses ready, only we didn't know then what he meant." 55

Mrs. Bryan looked at Winona's vivid, earnest face, and--understood.

"I think you are quite right, Ray of Light. I'll speak to the girls."

She stood up and struck lightly on the little Indian drum to call the girls' attention.

"Girls!" she said, "as the dance that the Scouts have asked us to is an affair to which we have been invited as an official body, it seems to me that it would be only courteous for us to wear our ceremonial gowns. So I am going to ask that you all do it."

There was a murmur of approval all over the room. When you have just acquired a beautiful new costume it's human nature to want to wear it early and often. There was only a plaintive wail, which Marie suppressed, from Edith Hillis:

"Oh, my lovely new green messaline!"

Winona crossed over to the place where Adelaide still sat.

"Well?" she said triumphantly.

"Did you tell Mrs. Bryan anything about me?" Adelaide demanded suspiciously.

"No, I didn't," replied Winona rather indignantly. "What do you take me for, when I said I wouldn't?"

"Well, I didn't know," apologized Adelaide. "And--thank you, ever so much, Winona! You--you don't *know*!"

Winona laughed.

"Why, yes, I do. At least, I've often wanted new clothes when I couldn't have them. But mother says 56 if you can't the next best thing is to go on wearing what you have, and be so cheerful nobody has time to think what you have on!"

"Nobody ever told me that," pondered Adelaide, as if it were an entirely new idea to her. "But my mother's dead, you see. And, anyway, it doesn't sound as if it could be true. Did you ever try it?"

"Yes," Winona said, and laughed. "I did--it was funny, too. I was visiting some cousins of mine. I hadn't expected to stay, and I hadn't brought a single party thing, and none of their clothes would fit me. They had perfectly lovely dresses. And suddenly we were all invited to a party, and I had nothing but a blue linen; and all the rest of them in the fluffiest clothes you ever saw!"

"Well," said Adelaide, "didn't it feel *horrid*."

"Yes, it did for awhile," owned Winona. "But everybody was sitting around as stiff as stiff--you know, some parties are like that at first. And somebody just had to say something. And pretty soon I thought of a game that just fitted in, and asked them to play it. After that I was so busy thinking up games that I never remembered a thing I had on till we got home that night. And I only did then because my cousin Ethel said, 'Oh, I've torn my dress!' and I said it was queer I hadn't torn mine, too--and then I remembered that it was linen and wouldn't tear. We certainly had a good time at that party!"

Adelaide looked at Winona's shining eyes and flushed cheeks enviously. 57

"Yes, you could do that," she said, "and people would be so busy watching you that they wouldn't know whether you had a flour-sack on or a satin. But I can't, because I keep worrying all the time about what people think of me."

"Oh, I should think that *would* be horrid," Winona sympathized.

"It is," said Adelaide, "only I---"

The rest that Adelaide had been going to say was drowned, because just then came the signal for the closing song, and soon the Council Fire was over.

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"What on earth were you talking to Adelaide Hughes so long about?" demanded Louise curiously as they walked home, for their ways lay together.

"Oh, just things," was Winona's answer. "I think she's awfully shy, and a little afraid of the rest of us, Lou."

"And you think we ought to make a special fuss over her?" said Louise mournfully. "I knew that was coming. Well, I suppose we will--Helen and I always do what you tell us to. I wish I were shy, and people ran around saying, 'we really must make an effort to draw poor little timid Louise out!'"

Winona burst out laughing--the idea of "poor, little, timid Louise" was so irresistibly funny.

"It's going to be a gorgeous dance, though." Louise went on. "Wasn't it splendid of the Scouts to think of doing it? And what about my being right?" 58

"You certainly were right," Winona admitted. "Are you sure you don't mind going on alone?"

For they had reached the Merriam house.

"Not a bit," said Louise cheerfully. "It's only a block, anyway. Good-night, honey."

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"Oh, it's lovely!" exclaimed Winona next morning when she ran downstairs. She flung herself on Tom bodily and hugged him hard as she spoke.

"What's lovely?" asked Tom, detaching himself, or trying to. "Go easy, Winnie; it was just sheer luck that you didn't break any ribs or my collar-bone or something. Affection's all right in its place, but----"

"But its place isn't on you, you mean?" retorted Winona, unwinding herself cheerfully from her brother. "Why, I mean the dance, of course."

"Oh, that!" said Tom. "That's nothing! It ought to be pretty good fun, though, don't you think so?"

"Oh, I know it will!" cried Winona fervently. "Are the boys going to wear their uniforms?"

"Well," said Tom doubtfully, "we don't know. You see, we've hiked in 'em, and rolled around on the grass in 'em wrestling, and done about everything to those poor old uniforms that you can do to clothes, and they really aren't fit for civilized society."

"Meaning ours?" said Winona. "Thanks for the compliment! Why don't you have them cleaned? I suppose even khaki cleans!" 59

"I don't know," said her brother, "I'll ask mother. Maybe we can manage it. But--oh, say, Winnie, there's something I wanted to speak to you about. You know, there are new people moved in next door. They're Southerners, here for the mother's health or something. There's a boy about my age, and a girl somewhere around yours. I don't know much about the girl, but Billy Lee's an awfully decent fellow, and we've got him in the Scouts. Now what do you think about taking his sister into your Camp Fire? She'd just about fit in as far as age goes, and it would be nice and neighborly. We'll have to ask her for the dance anyway, because there aren't enough of you Camp Firers yet to go around. The girl must need something to do, because Billy seems to worry about her rather. Stands to reason it isn't natural for a fellow to fret about his sister having a good time unless she needs it pretty badly."

"Oh, I don't know," said Winona. "When you come to a strange place things are bound to be stupid till you get to know people. We've lived here always, you know. But I'll go over and see her as soon as I've done the breakfast dishes."

Accordingly, when the breakfast dishes were done and the dining-room tidied, Winona washed her hands over again very carefully, and put cold-cream and talcum powder on them, for she did not like the smell of dish-water, especially when she was going calling. Then she made her way to the house next door.

All the houses on that block stood in deep yards, 60 which went all around them. Winona crossed the path and went up the porch, feeling a little shy. She had not asked anyone to join the Camp Fire before. They were to take in five new girls at the next monthly meeting, just before they went camping, but all of them had let the girls know that they wanted to join. Winona was a moving spirit in Camp Karonya, and she knew that anyone she vouched for would be welcome. But she did hope the next-door girl would fit in with the rest of them.

The door was opened by a colored maid, but before she could say whom she was, a dark, handsome boy of about fifteen, in a Scout uniform, came running down the stairs.

"You're Winnie Merriam, aren't you?" he asked eagerly. "I'm Billy Lee. I asked your brother to send you over to see Nataly."

Winona liked Billy on the spot, he was so friendly and natural and nice, and very good-looking besides.

"If his sister's like him she'll be splendid to have in the Camp Fire," she thought, and her spirits went up with such a bound that she was able to smile brightly, and say enthusiastically as she held out her hand to Billy Lee:

"Yes, indeed, I'm Winona Merriam, and I'm so glad Tom did send me. I know your sister and I are going to be friends."

"Well, I do hope so," said Billy as confidentially as if he had known her for years. "I'm having a gorgeous time in the Scouts--went on a hike yesterday, 61 and we never got back till nine o'clock, and three of the fellows got all stung up with a hornet's nest."

This didn't sound much like a fine time to Winona, but she supposed boys knew what they liked. She couldn't help laughing, though.

If that's your idea of a wonderful time

Take me home--take me home!

she hummed. She thought she'd sung it under her breath, but it was evidently loud enough to be heard, for Billy Lee burst out laughing, too.

"Well, I didn't mean that getting stung was a pleasure exactly," said he, "but we do have dandy times."

All this time they had been standing in the hall. Suddenly it seemed to occur to Billy that Winona had come to see his sister, not him. He ushered her hurriedly into the living-room.

"I'll send Nataly down to you," he promised. But in another minute he came tearing downstairs again.

"She says, would you mind coming up to her room?" he panted. "She hasn't felt so awfully well to-day, and she isn't exactly up."

Winona followed him, consumed with curiosity as to what could ail a girl, not to be up on a beautiful spring morning, and what "not exactly up" meant. She found out in another minute.

The bed-room where Nataly was had all its windows closed, and there was a close scent of toilet-water and sachet-powder and unairedness through the whole place. 62

"Here's Winnie Merriam, that I told you about, sister," said Billy Lee, and bolted. He never seemed to walk, only to run.

Nataly Lee rose from the couch where she had been lying, and came toward Winona.

"I'm very glad to see you," she greeted Winnie languidly. "I think I have seen you--out in your back garden yesterday."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Winona. "I was playing tag there with my sister Florence and little Bessie Williams."

"Do you still play tag?" asked Nataly, gesturing her visitor to a seat, and lifting one weary eyebrow.

"Not as a confirmed habit," said Winona mischievously. "But you can't play it well with only two, and the children wanted me to, so--well, I just did, that was all. Don't you like tag?" she added. ("I was morally certain she'd faint," she confided to Tom afterwards, "but she didn't.")

As a matter of fact, Nataly pulled closer the blue brocaded negligee that was obviously covering up a nightgown, and said, "I don't know much about games. I like reading better."

"Oh, do you?" exclaimed Winona, interested at once. "I love reading, too, but somehow there's so little time for it except when it's bad weather. Don't you do anything but read?"

"Not much," replied Nataly languidly. "Sports bore me."

Winona gave an inward gasp of dismay. 63

"Mercy!" she thought, "what a queer girl!" But outwardly she persevered. "Don't you ever dance?"

Nataly opened her heavy hazel eyes with a little more interest.

"Oh, yes, I dance, of course."

"So do I," said Winona. "I love it."

"Do you?" said Nataly. "I shouldn't think so--you seem so--athletic."

"Oh, I'm glad," said Winona innocently, beaming with pleasure. "But I'm not, particularly. I can swim, of course, and row and paddle a little, and play tennis a little. But I've never played hockey or basket-ball, either of them, much. Or baseball."

"Do girls play baseball up here?" demanded Nataly, sitting up and letting a paper novel with a thrilling picture on the cover slide to the floor.

"They do," averred Winona solemnly, but with sparkling eyes. She was tempted to go on shocking her hostess by thrilling stories of invented boxing-matches between herself and her little schoolmates, but she thought better of it.

"But that wasn't really what I came about," she went on, looking longingly at the closed window, for the airless room was beginning to make her cheeks burn. "Next week the Scouts are giving us Camp Fire Girls a dance, you know--and you are coming, aren't you?"

"Yes, I think so," Nataly spoke slowly, lying back on the sofa and beginning to finger her paper novel again.

"Well"--it came out with rather a rush--"would you like to join the Camp Fire? I think you'd like it."

She went on enthusiastically telling Nataly all about it, till she was brought up short by a genuine and unsuppressed yawn on Nataly's part.

"All that work?" said Nataly plaintively. "Oh, I couldn't do any of those things--I'd die!"

"Oh, I'm sorry," Winona was a little taken aback. The idea of considering whether things were too much trouble or not was a new one to her. She had always gone on the principle that--why--you *wanted* to plunge into things head-foremost, and do them with all your might--that was the way to have fun! So the idea of lying on a sofa and shuddering at the idea of work was a great surprise.

"No, I really couldn't join," said Nataly, with the first energy she had shown. "But I'm very glad you came to see me."

"Yes, so am I," said Winona politely. "And you will come and see me as soon as you can, won't you?"

"Yes, indeed," promised Nataly. She threw up her hand and pressed a button back of her sofa as she spoke, for Winona was rising to go.

"Emma will show you the way downstairs," she said languidly, "and don't you want this? It's very interesting--I've just finished it."

"This" was the paper novel with the melodramatic cover.

"Why, thank you!" said Winona, taking it politely. "It's very kind of you. And you will come over?" 65

"Oh, yes," responded Billy Lee's sister, "I shall be very glad to call."

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"Well, how was it?" demanded Tom of his sister that evening.

Winona laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

"Why, very nice. Only Nataly Lee's about a million years older than I am, and she made me feel as if I were seven instead of fourteen. And she certainly is the *queerest* girl! She doesn't seem to want to do anything for fear it will be too much trouble!"

"What about joining up with your Daughters of Pocahontas?" inquired Tom.

Winona didn't stop to rebuke him for his flippancy.

"Well, about that," she replied, "she reminded me of one of the haughty ladies in the Japanese Schoolboy's housework experiences--don't you remember? 'I have not the want to,' she sniffed haughtily with considerable frequency! But she's coming to the dance."

"Queer," said Tom. "There's no nonsense about Billy--he's a good all-around fellow. Well, you never can tell."

"No," acquiesced Winona philosophically, "you can't, and it's rather a good thing, too!"

## 66CHAPTER SEVEN

"You certainly are taking it easy, considering there's going to be a dance!" declared Tom. "Usually when anything like that is going to happen you run around like a hen with its head cut off!"

"No reason why I should, this time," said Winona, laughing. "You Scouts are giving the dance, not we. Though perhaps it's because my dress is off my mind. You always have to press a frock out and clean your white shoes, and be sure your sash is all right, when you're wearing anything festive. But thanks to your suggestion about wearing the ceremonial dress, you'll see 'ten little Injuns' walking in to-night, headbands, moccasins and all--and I have nothing to worry about."

Winona stretched herself out in the Morris-chair and looked provokingly comfortable and unoccupied.

"I heard about it," said Tom.

Winona flushed.

"What did you hear?"

"About you and your ceremonial dresses. But I guessed, too."

"Who told you--and what did they tell?" demanded Winona, sitting up and looking ruffled.

"Marie--that all the girls mightn't have party clothes," Tom placidly replied.

"Marie hadn't any business to!" said Winona.

"Well, I guessed the rest. You see, Lonny Hughes is in the Scouts, too, and he--well, he tells me things 67 sometimes. And I know Adelaide felt pretty badly for awhile because she couldn't keep up with some of you--Edith mostly, I guess. He said he had to fairly bully his sister into joining you girls, even after Nannie'd coaxed her. You certainly were a good sport, Win! You know, there's just Lonny and Adelaide and a younger sister, and the father. They have one of those little flats over James's drug-store, in the Williamson Block, and Mr. Hughes doesn't get an awful lot of salary. Anyway, the kids keep house, and Adelaide has to look after herself all the way round. So she takes this hard, the money end, I mean."

"I think she's silly!" said downright Winona.

"Maybe!" said Tom wisely, and went on bestowing loving care on his repeating rifle, the joy of his life.

Winona retired into a book, and Tom, looking up a second later, caught sight of its cover.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated, eying it. "Where did you get *that*?"

"Where did she get what?" asked Louise, walking unceremoniously in. "Hello, Tom. Oh, Winnie, I want you to show me about this headband. I can't get the colors matched right--you know you have to be rather kind to beautiful golden hair like mine. It won't stand every color there is."

"No rest for the wicked!" said Winona cheerfully, sitting up and abandoning her book. "You don't mean you're going to try to get this done for to-night?"

"I certainly am," said Louise doggedly. 68

"All right." And Winona, pulled up a little table between them. "Here--this is the way."

The two girls bent over the little loom, their heads close together. Tom, meanwhile, finished cleaning his gun, wrapped it carefully in oiled red flannel, and looked around for more worlds to conquer.

The first thing his eyes lighted on was the paper novel Winona had reluctantly laid down--the one Nataly had loaned her.

"For the love of Mike, where did you get this?"

"Your friend's sister, next door," said Winona mischievously. "Don't you like her taste in books?"

"Crazy about it!" said Tom. "'Beautiful Coralie's Doom; or, Answered in Jest,'" he read from the vivid cover. "Say Louise, this hero was a dream. You ought to hear the amount of things he's called the heroine, and this is only the first chapter!"

"Go ahead," urged Louise, while Winona tried vainly to get the book away from her brother, "I guess I can bear it!"

"Let's see. Child, sweetheart, angel, cara-mia, little one--I'll have to start on the other hand, I've used up all my fingers on this one--loved one, petite, schatzchen--wonder what that is? The only thing he's left out so far is 'kiddo.' I suppose we'll come to that further on. 'Lancelot looked down at her through his long, superfluous eyelashes,'" Tom went on, reading at the top of his strong young voice. "Those were well-trained eyelashes all right. I'll bet he hung by 'em every day to get 'em in shape to use so much. 69 I've found six sentences about those lashes on one page, and every one the same."

"You wouldn't expect him to have a new set every time, would you?" inquired Louise sarcastically.

"It's a wonder he didn't have to. One set must have been pretty well worn out by the end of a chapter. 'Ah, you wicked fellow,' Coralie said archly," he went on, sitting down on the floor with the book. Winona made a dive for it, but she wasn't quick enough. "This wicked part's what gets me. There's an average of twenty-five 'wicked's to every chapter, and the poor fellow's never even forgotten to return an umbrella!"

"Or a book his sister was reading," suggested Louise.

"And what's a 'saucy meow,' Winona? Coralie did 'em all the time. Can you?"

But here Winona threw herself bodily on him, and this time she managed to recover her book, which she sat on.

"Well, this literature class is very interesting, but my happy home wants me," said Louise, rising and taking up her loom and the headband, which was in a fair way to be properly finished now. "Thanks, ever so much, Ray of Light. You're the best girl as ever-ever-was. See you to-night, Tommy."

"Now, *that's* some girl," said Tom admiringly. "No nonsense about her. Do you want me to take you over, Winnie?"

"That would be awfully nice of you, but we thought 70 we'd 'attend in a body,' as the papers say," answered Winona. "Aren't you boys going to?"

"Well, you see, there are extra girls," explained Tom. "There aren't enough of you Scoutralettes to go round, so we've asked some other girls, and we have to go after them. But we'll get them early, and be there to meet you when you get there."

"Well, I don't want to croak." And Winona arose to go into the kitchen, for that way lay an honor bead, and it was nearly supper-getting time. "But I think the boy who goes after Nataly Lee *won't* be drawn up to meet us, unless we kindly hold back the order of march for him."

"Shouldn't wonder," called Tom after her. "Get something good for supper, there's a useful sister!"

But though there was a slight delay in the order of march, it was Louise Lane, of all unexpected people, who was responsible for it: her headband went wrong after all, she explained when, flushed and panting, she appeared in her other one at the meeting-place.

The girls fell into step and marched, two and two, out into the street up the short block to the school-house, where most of the public affairs in the town were held.

"Oh, isn't it gorgeous?" whispered Winona irrepressibly as they came steadily and lightly up the centre of the hall, till they faced the Scouts.

These last were drawn up in a military formation, in the order of their seniority, with the Scoutmaster at their head. He was a plump, cheerful, middle-aged 71 man, the father of three of the Scouts, and vice-principal of the High School. But you would never have thought he had seen a class-room, he looked so military and colonel-fied, there at the head of his line of erect, soldierly-looking boys.



"It's like real receptions!" whispered Helen to Winona, as the orchestra blared out "Hail to the Chief!" which was as near to "Welcome to the Camp Fire Girls" as the orchestra's resources could come. Then Mrs. Bryan and Mr. Gedney gave the order to break ranks, and the orchestra slid with surprising ease into a Paul Jones. So did the boys and girls.

"We got here first, you see," whispered Tom to Winona as he crossed her. The round went on for quite a little while before the whistle blew for the breaking up into twos, so Winona was able to question and answer bit by bit as she and her brother met and parted.

"What about the extra girls?" she whispered, for no extra girls were to be seen.

"The fellows are going after them now," explained Tom. "This was a dance----" Tom had to leave, and finished on the next round, "for the Camp Fire. The others didn't come first, naturally."

And sure enough, by the time the first dance was over, the extra boys were back, bringing partners with them--girls Camp Karonya knew, and who were presently going to form a second Camp Fire--for Camp Karonya's membership list was almost full now. The newcomers had evidently been asked to wear fancy costume, and the effect of the Indian dresses that the Camp 72 Fire Girls wore, and the boys' military clothes, was lighted up and made more beautiful by the dash of color made by an occasional gypsy or Oriental lady.

The hall had been decorated in a half-military, half-woodland fashion, with tents draped against the walls, crossed rifles, green boughs and lighted lanterns. It was a warm night, so they had filled the big fireplace at the side of the room with boughs. The entrance to the kitchen, where the cooking-classes were held in the school every Friday, was covered by a tent. Behind that tent, the exciting rumor spread, was a real colored caterer who was going to serve refreshments of unparalleled splendor at the proper time.

But at about ten o'clock a frenzied rapping was heard from the place which was supposed to hold the mysterious caterer. It rose above the music. Mr. Gedney hurried to the door to see what had happened. An irate negro appeared--the city caterer who had been imported to lend grandeur to the scene.

"Mr. Gedney," he said in what he may have thought was a tragic whisper, but which echoed through half the hall, "I'se been a-caperin' fo' nineteen yeahs, an' ah nevah had anything as shockin' happen to me as dis heah befo'."

"Why, what's the matter, Thomas?" Mr. Gedney asked, while the more curious of the dancers marked time gently within earshot.

"Dey done stole mah 'freshments!" wailed the darky, forgetting, in his emotion, to lower his voice. "Ah had de ice-cream an' de san-wiches an' de fruit-punch 73 an' de fancy-cake"--a soft moan went up unconsciously over the room as the hungry dancers heard of these vanished glories--"an' Ah put dem out on de side poach till Ah wanted dem. Ah didn't know Ah was comin' to no thief-town. An dey's *gone!*"

Mr. Gedney rose to the occasion nobly.

"We'll find some of them, Thomas," he said.

By this time nearly everyone in the room had paused about the door. Mr. Gedney raised his voice. "Ladies," he said, "if you will excuse your partners for half an hour they will go out on the trail of our--ah--vanished refection. Scouts, attention! By twos, forward--hike!"

In an instant every Scout, with a hasty excuse to his partner, had vanished from the building.

"It's that Bent Street gang," hissed Tom to his sister in passing. "We know where they hang out, and where they're likely to have cached the eats."

"I only hope there'll be something left by the time the Scouts find the food," wailed Louise. "Don't look so happy, Winnie--it's insulting!"

"She's swelling as if she had an idea," suggested Helen, who had come over. "What is it, Win?"

"So I have!" said Winona, her eyes sparkling as they always did when Great Ideas came her way. She was rather given to them. She ran across to Mrs. Bryan and began to talk to her in an excited whisper.

When she had done Mrs. Bryan nodded.

"Splendid!" she said. "Tell the girls yourself, my dear." 74

So Winona stood swiftly out in the middle of the floor, a slim, gallant little figure in her Indian frock and the long strings of scarlet beads she had added to it.

"Girls!" she said. "Those refreshments mayn't ever come back. The boys won't be back with them right away, anyhow. Let's get together and make some more!"

"Good!" called out all the girls at once, and came flocking around Mrs. Bryan and Winona for orders. But Mrs. Bryan wouldn't give any.

"You manage it, Ray of Light!" said she as Winona turned to her.

"We want sandwiches and fruit punch and cakes, and--we can't get ice-cream this late at night," she remembered.

"We can get oysters," said Helen's competent voice from behind a group of girls. "That oyster house down on Front Street is always open till twelve."

"Then we can make creamed oysters--good!" said Winona. "Let's see--sixteen couples--about fifty sandwiches, if you count three to a person. Six loaves of bread, about. Marie, you belong to a big family--do you think you have any bread in the house your family could part with?"

"Three loaves, anyway," said Marie.

"I'll bring the other three," spoke up Elizabeth Greene, one of the new members.

They both threw on their wraps and hurried out. Fortunately, most of the girls lived close by.

"We'll send Thomas for the oysters," suggested Mrs. Bryan next. "None of you want to go to Front Street this time of night."

She produced her purse from the pocket of her ceremonial dress, and went to send Thomas for the oysters.

"Has anybody got anything in their house to fill sandwiches with?" Winona went on.

"We have two pounds of dates," offered Edith Hillis, "and some rolls of cream cheese."

"And I have the other half of both sketches, peanut butter and lettuces," called out Louise, "three heads, and two big glasses."

"All right, go get 'em," said Winona unceremoniously, and two more sisters of the Camp Fire hurried on their wraps and fled out into the night.

"I have milk and butter, myself," went on Winona.

"Nannie," hinted Helen to Mrs. Bryan, who had returned, "do you remember those three big layer cakes you made for the Presbyterian fair? I'll make them over again if I can have them now."

"No you won't, my child, because they're my contribution," returned her step-mother briskly. "Thank you for reminding me. I'll get them, and pineapples and lemons for your contribution to the lemonade."

Dorothy remembered that she had some oranges and bananas, and Adelaide finally recalled to the rest that creamed oysters need thickening, and went after flour and salt and pepper.

A couple of the other girls had candy at home, beautifully fresh and home-made. In fifteen minutes every girl was back laden down, and all of them invaded the little school kitchen. Fortunately most of the sixteen had taken cooking lessons there, and knew just where to find everything, even to their own aprons. So there was no time lost searching for matches and knives and bowls, and other such necessities.

One group of four cut and squeezed and sliced fruit for the fruit-punch--or fruit-lemonade, to give it the only name it was really entitled to. Another set prepared the sandwiches, which, what with pitting and chopping the dates for the date-and-peanut-butter ones, and cutting and spreading six big loaves of bread, was quite an undertaking. Another group handled the creamed oysters. This last wasn't exactly a group, though, because, try as you may, it is impossible

for more than two people to make one cream gravy, or white sauce. The rest cut cake and arranged plates and looked after the serving generally.

Thomas the "caperer" sat in a corner and "shucked oysters," as he called it, with his two attendant waiters standing statue-like behind him. It made a very impressive, if rather useless group.

Mrs. Bryan lent a helping hand here and there as it was needed, but in the main she left the guidance of the affair to Winona's generalship.

"Why, I didn't know how easy it was to have people do things!" Winona whispered to the Guardian, when that lady came over to her once to advise a little more butter in the gravy.

"You happen to have executive ability, that's all," explained Mrs. Bryan. 77

Winona laughed. "Oh, it doesn't take executive ability when people want to help!" she returned gayly.

The boys got back in just forty-five minutes, with rather dirtier uniforms than they had taken away. They were panting, also, and had a general cheerful air of having had something happen. But with them they bore, triumphantly, the untouched freezer, full of beautiful molds of ice-cream; also a large pasteboard box full of untouched, but rather crumpled-looking, fancy cakes.

The sandwiches, they explained regretfully, were beyond recall, and so was the salad. The Bent Street gang had been just about to begin their last course when the Scouts descended.

"We had a bully time!" said Billy Lee to Winona, who emerged from the kitchen, trying hard to look unoccupied, as did all the rest of the girls. "We didn't expect a lark like that in the middle of this. But it's hard on you girls to miss half the refreshments!"

"Don't worry," said Winona cheerfully. "We aren't going to miss any of the refreshments, and neither are you! What do you think Camp Fire Girls are good for?"

"Lots!" said Billy honestly, "but I don't see----"

"That's because you aren't looking," laughed Winona.

She pointed towards the little tent that draped the kitchen door. From out that tent issued haughtily Thomas's two negro waiters, each bearing a steaming, creamed-oyster-laden tray. 78

"You'd better sit down," suggested Winona, "Everybody else has."

"Well, this is great!" cried Billy enthusiastically, between bites of creamed oysters and sandwiches, and sips of fruit lemonade that was really better than that the Bent Street gang had stolen. "You don't mean to say you girls did all this right off the bat, while we were hunting the hoodlums, do you?"

"Why, of course we did," and Winona dimpled with pleasure. "There were such a lot of us that it wasn't hard at all."

"Anyhow, whoever managed it was a mighty clever person," said Billy, meditatively eating his last oyster. "Don't you think so?"

This happened to be a rather embarrassing question.

"Why, no!" she said thoughtlessly.

"Then it was you!" said Billy, jumping cleverly to his conclusion.

"We all helped," said Winona, blushing. "Everybody brought something. I only thought of it first--that was easy."

"Easy if you know how!" said Billy skeptically.

"Winona knew how," asserted Helen's voice behind them. She began to talk to Winona and Billy very earnestly about several things that didn't seem to have much to do with life in general. They had to turn half round to face her, which was what she wanted, for it prevented Winona from seeing that all the members of the Camp Fire were clustered near her place. The first she knew of it was Mrs. Bryan's voice saying: 79

"All together, girls--a cheer for Ray of Light, who saved the refreshments!"

The girls' voices rang out in the triple cheer for Winona, who blushed harder than ever.

"I didn't do anything but suggest it!" she explained uselessly. Then she remembered her manners and sprang up.

"Thank you, Sisters of the Camp Fire--even if I *don't* deserve it!" she said gayly.

Then the band started up and dancing went on.

The evening ended with a riotous Virginia reel (which, by the way, meant an honor bead for every girl, because the boys none of them knew much about reeling, and had to be shown) and a final ringing cheer for the Camp Fire Girls by the Scouts. Then the party broke up. Though broke up is hardly the word, for the girls marched out, as they had come, in a body, with a military file of Scouts on either side of them. Altogether it certainly was the most festive of parties, and everybody thought so even next morning, when the mournful things about a party are apt to occur to you.

The Scouts insisted, by the way, on replacing the various things that had been taken out of various pantries. The girls had intended to pay their families scrupulously back, but the Scouts extracted an exact account of the commandeered supplies from their sisters and cousins. Then they saw to it that everything, from the last loaf of bread to the last peanut, was redelivered by four next day. And so ended "the very best party," as everybody agreed, "that we ever had."

## 80 CHAPTER EIGHT

"It was a nice party!" sighed Winona, for the tenth time, next day.

"It was," admitted Tom. "I enjoyed it myself. Also the eats were good. Very clever of us to give a party like that. The question is, if you girls had to manage a real meal what would happen?"

"That's exactly what we're going to do," said Winona. "This very afternoon, at Mrs. Bryan's!"

"Oh, can't I go?" clamored Florence.

"Well, it's just Helen and Louise and Adelaide Hughes and I," Winona hesitated. "It's the maid's day out, and we're going to get the supper and clear it away. Four of the others are going to do it a day or so later. And we're all going to try to get the same supper at our own houses, the next night."

"Then of course I want to go!" said Florence, "so I can get the same supper at home the next night."

Still Winona hesitated. It certainly is a nuisance to have a small sister who wants to tag, when you are just starting off to have a particularly nice time with your most intimate friends. And to add to the charm of the situation, just then in rushed Puppums through the back door, and seeing Winona with her hat in her hand, promptly sat up and began to beg wildly. Winona began to laugh.

"Oh, come on, then, the whole family!" she said. 81

Florence and Puppums both yelped for joy.

"Shall I send Tom over to bring you back this evening?" asked Winona's mother, who was sitting near.

"Oh, no--it isn't far," said Winona, "and it won't be late when I get back. Besides, I'll have Florence and the doggie."

"Very well," said her mother. "And don't try to cook things that are too gorgeous, my dear, because we haven't as much money as the Bryans, and it might turn out to be very expensive."

"I'll remember," said Winona, starting off with her little sister beside her, and Puppums careering wildly about them both. But it was one of the things that never did worry the Merriams, whether or not they had as much money as their neighbors. The three children and the dog, as their friends said, "always did seem to be having such a good time!" They were handsome and light-hearted--that is, the children were. Puppums was more remarkable for brains than beauty, as Tom said; being part pug, part bull-terrier and part fox-terrier, with a dash of retriever suspected in his remote ancestry. However, as long as he had his own way and plenty of bones and enough laps to sit on, neither his looks nor anything else worried the Puppums dog. His family had intended to give him a very fine name, but as Puppums he started when he was a small, wriggling mongrel-baby, and to nothing but Puppums would he ever 82 deign to answer. So the family made the best of it. It was a way they had, anyway.

Florence began to career around her sister very much as the dog was doing, singing at the top of her voice meanwhile. So, as Winona did not have to talk, she began to think. What her mother had said about their not having so much money as the Bryans set her to wondering, not about herself, but about Adelaide Hughes. She had noticed that Mrs. Bryan seemed to want Adelaide to make friends with the other girls, and that Adelaide herself was very apt to leave the first advances to them. And the reason, she supposed, was that Adelaide felt she was too poor to keep up with them, or so Tom had said.

"But I don't ever feel as if I had to keep up with Helen, and she has twice as many dresses and twice as much money to spend as I have," meditated Winona. "I wonder if I could ask Adelaide about it without hurting her feelings. I will if I get the chance."

About this time Winona and her caravan reached the Bryan house, and Florence ran ahead so quickly to ring the bell that Winona had to run, too, to be there when the door opened.

"I've brought my family, Mrs. Bryan!" said Winona. "I hadn't any choice--they simply would come. It's really your fault for being so popular with them."

"Your family's very welcome!" said Mrs. Bryan. 83 "If it's willing to be useful. What about it, Florence,--will you run

errands for us if we want you to?"

"Course I will!" said Florence, flinging herself bodily on Mrs. Bryan and hugging her hard. "I want to work!"

"Puppums wants to help, too," said Helen.

"Well, you can't help that way, you little villain," said Louise, appearing aproned in the doorway and making a dash for the dog. He had his paws on the table, and was most ill-manneredly trying to find out what was wrapped up in the paper with the lovely meaty smell. Louise rescued the package, and carried it out to the kitchen.

"Is everyone here?" asked Mrs. Bryan. "No, I miss Adelaide."

"She's just coming now," said Helen from the living-room window. "I wonder if she's remembered to bring her apron?"

"Oh," cried Winona, "I never brought mine!"

"I'll go get it," said Florence. "You see, you need me already!"

She flew off, with the dog at her heels.

"Truly, I'm sorry, Mrs. Bryan," apologized Winona again, "but she would have felt so badly if I hadn't let her come!"

"You ought to sit on her more," suggested Louise, popping her head out of the kitchen door again. "I do on mine."

"Well, you have such a lot of brothers and sisters 84 you have to," said Winona, for Louise was the oldest of six.

"Bessie wanted to come," said Louise, "but I put my foot down."

"On Bessie?" laughed Winona, as she ran to open the door for Adelaide. "I hope you didn't hurt her."

"Did you bring your apron, Adelaide?" called Helen anxiously.

"There! She's asked every one of us that question in turn," said Louise, coming out into the living-room for the fourth time in five minutes. "I do hope you did!"

"Oh, yes, I did," said Adelaide. "I have it here under my arm."

"And here's Florence back with mine!" said Winona. "Now may we start?"

"It isn't quite time yet," said Mrs. Bryan. "If we plan for supper at six, one hour is a great plenty of time for supper-getting, especially with all of us at it. It's only four-thirty now, and I want to tell you a plan I have. Come here, Florence. It's about you and your friends."

"Oh, a plan about me!" said Florence. "That is nice!"

"You see, girls," went on Mrs. Bryan, "there are always little sisters or cousins of Camp Fire Girls, like Florence and Bessie and the rest, who want to play, too. They aren't old enough to belong to Camp Fires of their own, so the way we do is to make them an annex to ours, under the name of Blue Birds--the Blue 85 Bird stands for happiness, you know. And we help them, and show them how to have good times, too, and--they don't have to tag any more."

"I didn't mean to tag," said Florence, looking a little ashamed. "I just wanted to--to come, too!"

"Well, if you will go and find Bessie Lane, and--Adelaide, you have a little sister about their ages, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Adelaide. "Frances is nine."

"Well, Florence, get Bessie and Frances if you can find them, and we'll discover something for our nest of Blue Birds to do."

"I think it's lovely, being a Blue Bird," said Florence, very much impressed by belonging to a society of her own.

"Well, if you're a bird, fly!" said Louise, giving her a little push.

The girls talked for a while longer, then donned their aprons and went out into the kitchen, where they stood and

waited for further orders.

"There are four of you," said their Guardian. "There's the table to set, salad and dressing to make, meat and potatoes to prepare, and dessert. Cocoa and cake, too. You're welcome to anything in the ice-box, but the game is to get supper without buying anything extra, unless something like bread or sugar gives out--some staple."

"That will be more fun," said Winona, who had had some experience lately with cooking. "It's much more interesting thinking out ways to make things out 86 of other things, than when you cook straight ahead!"

Adelaide stared as if Winona had said a very strange thing. But then Adelaide always did look at Winona more or less that way.

"I think the most fun is eating out of paper bags," said Louise. "No washee dishee. However, I only think that--I wouldn't dare say it. How'll we divide?"

"Decide that yourselves," said Mrs. Bryan.

"Let's see what there is in the ice-box, first," Winona suggested prudently, when Mrs. Bryan had left them alone. So they investigated.

"Eight large baked potatoes!" counted Louise. "How on earth did you miscalculate so badly as that, Helen, or are they there for our special benefit?"

"No, it just happened," said Helen. "Father was going to bring a friend home to dinner last night, and neither of them could get here after all."

There was also a large piece of cooked beefsteak, a head of lettuce, a dish of cooked peas and some beets. There were other things in the ice-box as well, but these were what the girls chose. They brought some apples up from down cellar, too, and stacked them in a row on the table with the other things.

"Now, Nannie said that the game was to use as many leftovers as possible and do everything as inexpensively as we could and yet have everything taste good and not seem warmed over," said Helen.

"That's something a lot of grown-up women never do," said Louise. "My aunt----" 87

Mrs. Bryan came from the living-room to say. "I'll show you anything you don't know about, girls, but you must do the actual work yourselves, or you won't know how."

"Yes!" said Louise. "Choose your poison, Ladies and Gentlemen!" She pulled her cooking-cap close down over her hair. "I'm going to do the potatoes. I think I know how to fix them."

"Cold baked potatoes?" said Helen. "There isn't anything, except creaming them."

"They're all right that way," said Louise, "but that isn't what I'm going to do."

"Well, I'll take the cake," said Helen. "I saw some sour milk in the ice-box, and spice-cake is the cheapest cake I know."

"I'll take the meat," said Winona. "There must be something I can do with a beautiful piece of steak like that, even if it is cooked."

Adelaide had not said anything.

"That leaves the salad for you, Adelaide," said Mrs. Bryan cheerfully. "Louise, you'd better see about some fruit for supper, for your potatoes won't take you long."

Then Mrs. Bryan introduced them to the ways of the gas-range, and went back to lie in wait for her Blue Birds.

Helen collected spice and molasses and flour and shortening around her corner of the table, and went systematically to work on her spice-cake. 88

"It looks like gingerbread," said Winona, getting the bread-crumb jar.

"It is, really, only it hasn't much ginger in," explained Helen. "Lots of people don't like ginger. What are you going to do

with your steak, Winnie?"

"Frame it!" advised Louise frivolously. "They say they have a four-pound steak under glass at the Metropolitan Museum, as a relic of the days when each family had at least one in a lifetime."

"If you want to frame your share of it you may," said Winona. "I'm going to eat mine."

"They're supposed to be eaten," put in Helen mildly. "But really, Winnie, I think you have rather a hard job. There's not nearly enough steak there for eight people. It was only intended for five in the first place."

"That's the game, isn't it?" said Winona placidly. "Besides, I'm going to send Florence home to supper. It's all right for her to attach herself to the party for the afternoon, but I draw the line at her inviting herself to a meal--don't you think so, Louise?"

"I'm wid yez," called Louise back from the gas-range, where she was doing something with sugar and water. "Bessie goes back, too."

Winona got the chopping-machine, divided a big stalk of celery with Adelaide, made another excursion to the shelf over the ice-box for some peppers and onions, and began to grind her beefsteak.

"Croquettes?" inquired Louise curiously.

"No, scalloped meat," answered Winona. "The 89 croquettes won't go as far, and there'll be the cream gravy extra, and we'll need milk for the cocoa. Besides, the deep fat to fry them would be another horrible extravagance."

She put in a layer of meat as she spoke, then the ground celery and peppers and seasoning, and a generous layer of bread-crumbs.

"But aren't celery and peppers an extravagance, too?" put in Adelaide, looking faintly interested. She was the only one of the four girls not busy. She had not started on her salad.

"They would be if they weren't in the house," said Winona carelessly, "though I don't think they are costly this time of year. But I'm using them for their bulk. Mother flavors with celery seed when celery's too high."

She continued to build up her edifice of meat and crumbs and so forth, and finally drenched it with cold water and put it in the oven.

"Be careful of my cake when you look at your meat," reminded Helen, coming and tucking her spice-cake in beside the meat as she spoke. "How are you getting on, Adelaide?"

"Not at all," said Adelaide ashamedly. "I don't believe I know how to make salads."

"Come help me set the table, then," invited Helen.

"All right," said Adelaide, getting up slowly from her kitchen chair, and flinging her long, untidy braids back over her shoulders.

"No, Helen, please!" said Winona. "Let me 90 show Adelaide. I think we can make a perfectly lovely salad in a few minutes."

"All right, Winnie!" said Helen cheerfully, and vanished into the dining-room alone.

"I don't see how!" said Adelaide. "I thought you had to have chicken or lobster or such things for salad--and I'm sure I'd curdle the dressing."

"Of course you will if you expect to," said Louise, setting her syrup on to boil, and beginning to pare and quarter apples and drop them in cold water so they wouldn't brown. "Why don't you make boiled dressing?"

"I didn't know about it," said Adelaide.

"Good gracious!" said Louise. "How on earth do you manage at your house?"

"Well, there's just father and Lonny and France and I, and mostly father brings home things from the delicatessen. And



sometimes we roast meat and just eat at it till it's gone. I'm not old enough to know much about housekeeping, father says. But Lonny cooks sometimes."

Winona and Louise both stared at her.

"I'd go crazy," said Louise frankly. "I should think you'd get so you never wanted to eat anything."

"Anyway, you can 'try this on your piano' when you go home," Winona threw in hastily, giving Louise a furtive, if thorough, pinch as she passed her, for she had seen Adelaide color up. "Boiled dressing's easy. You know how to make drawn butter, don't you--white sauce?" 91

"Oh, yes," said Adelaide, rising.

"Well," explained Winona, "when you melt the butter in the pan to mix with the flour, you add some mustard, just a pinch, and salt and pepper. Then when you've put in the flour, and the milk, and it's just going to thicken, you put in the yolk of an egg. When it's cold you thin it with vinegar. That isn't hard, is it?"

Adelaide was swiftly following directions as Winona talked.

"Thin the egg with milk, and beat it a little--that's right," said Winona. "There--now take it off. The egg only wants to cook a minute. Now all you have to do is wait till it cools and add the vinegar, and--there's your dressing!"

"Why, it isn't a bit hard!" said Adelaide wonderingly.

"Nor a bit expensive," said Winona. "As for the salad, you can make salad out of any kind of vegetable that will cut up."

"Let me see if I can work it out alone," said Adelaide.

She washed the lettuce and set it on the individual salad plates Helen found for her. Then she began to combine peas and beets and celery quite as if she knew how.

Winona watched her for a minute, then went over to see what Louise was doing. While she had been helping Adelaide Louise's syrup had cooked enough to have the quartered apples dropped into it, and now 92 it was bubbling on the back of the stove. Just as Winona came over Louise took off the apples, cooked through, but not to the point of losing their shape, and put them outdoors to cool. Then she turned her attention to the baked potatoes of yesterday.

She had heated them through, and now she cut off the tops and scooped out the inside, and was mixing it with milk and butter and a little onion, and beating it till it was creamy.

"They're harder to do than if they were fresh," she said, pounding vigorously, "but I guess they'll come out all right, when they've been browned a minute."

"They'll be browned just about the time my scalloped meat's done," responded Winona, dropping to her knees before the oven. "Oh, Helen, come take out your cake! It's all done--I've tried it with a straw."

"Oh, it isn't burned, is it?" cried Helen, dashing in.

It wasn't. She put it on the shelf over the range, to keep warm, and headed a party bound upstairs to tidy up.

"You didn't set places for those little taggers?" called Louise to Helen on the way up.

"Not at our table," said Helen.

## 93 CHAPTER NINE

When the four girls came down and put on the supper they found a surprise waiting for them. Beside the large table the little sewing-table had been moved in, spread with a white cloth and set; and around it, very flushed and important, sat Florence, Bessie Lane, Frances Hughes, and Edith Hillis's little sister Lucy. Before Frances, who was the oldest, sat a big dish of creamed potatoes, a platter of Hamburg steak, and in front of each girl steamed a bowl of tomato soup.

"Well, where----" began everybody. All the small sisters answered at once.

"We cooked 'em on the gas-stove in the back parlor!"

"All but the soup," added conscientious little blonde Lucy. "We dumped that out of a can."

"Well, we cooked it, too, didn't we?" inquired Frances.

"So that was what was in the package Puppums wanted!" said Winona. "Where *is* Puppums, anyway?" she added as she set down her scalloped meat.

"I d'no," said Florence carelessly.

But just at that moment Puppums accounted for himself. He came in from the direction of the half-open back door, in his mouth a neatly done up package.

"*Oh!*" cried Winona and Florence in one despairing voice, "he's been stealing again! Drop it, you little wretch!" 94

Mrs. Bryan went around to Puppums, who was proudly sitting up on his haunches over his spoils.

"It isn't ours," she said, opening the bundle.

"What is it?" asked Winona. "I might as well know the worst."

"Chops," answered Mrs. Bryan briefly. "Two pounds of very nice lamb chops, with nothing at all to tell where they belong!"

"Oh, Puppums!" said Winona and Florence together tragically. The rest were all laughing but to Puppums's family it was far from a laughing matter.

Puppums Merriam was a splendid watch-dog. He was sweet-tempered and intelligent and obedient and cheerful, and everything a family dog should be. But he had one fault. He would occasionally snoop around back porches in search of anything the butcher might have left. The fact that he got three good meals a day, and was losing his figure far too fast for such a young and sprightly dog did not matter to him at all. Neither did he mind the fact that he got a good whipping every time Tom caught him at it. Happy indeed was the week wherein the Merriams did not have to apologetically return roasts or steaks to furious owners; or--if the condition of the prey made it necessary--buy new ones. But this last did not happen very often, for Puppums rarely brought home the bills with him, and it is hard to trace anonymous meat.

So when he proudly presented his contribution to the feast there was nothing to do but to pick up the chops and put them away. 95

"I can't spoil the fun by whipping him, and he always thinks my whippings are fun anyway, and wags his tail!" mourned Winona. "And we'll never know whose chops they were!"

"They're Puppums's chops now," said Louise. "Go on, give 'em to him, Winnie. If you went out and gathered chops you wouldn't want to be scolded."

"Well, I suppose he may as well have them," said Winona still sadly. So, although it was very wrong, and as she explained to the dog, it didn't create a precedent, soon the collector of chops was happily crunching them outside the back door, while the Camp Fire Girls ate made-over meat within.

"What about our camping out?" Louise demanded, after the first pangs of appetite were over. "What's the use of being us if we can't camp?"

"We *can* camp," answered their Guardian as she helped Helen to some more salad. "This is lovely dressing, Adelaide. I didn't know what good cooks all of you were. I have been looking things up, and I don't see why we shouldn't go in a short time now, if all of your parents are willing and can spare you."

There was a great commotion over at the table where the Blue Birds sat, and then hurried whispers--

"You ask, Lucy."

"No, you ask, Frances!"

Finally Florence spoke up.

"Can't the Blue Birds go camping, too?"

"Why, of course they can!" said Mrs. Bryan cordially. 96 "That is, just as with the Camp Fire Girls, if their mothers are willing."

"Oh, then I can go, if we take Frances," said Adelaide relievedly. "Father and Lonny can get along all right by themselves, but Frances couldn't. Oh, I'm so glad!" Which was quite a good deal for reserved Adelaide to say.

"So are we glad," said Helen heartily.

"I wonder whether we couldn't go to that place up on the Wampoag River. Have you thought of any place, Mrs. Bryan?"

"None but there or thereabouts," she said. "It's the best camping-place for a long distance, and only about twelve miles off."

"But won't the boys want to camp there, too?" asked Helen.

"There's plenty of room for everybody," said her step-mother. "I've been talking it over with Mr. Gedney, the Scoutmaster, and he says their camp will be about two and a half miles from the place I'd thought of our going. Wampoag River is very long, you know, and there must be five miles of woodland along both sides. So we needn't interfere with each other at all."

"Then that's all right," said everybody.

"And oh, let's hike there!" cried Louise. "We can do it in two days as easily as anything. Please, dear, nice, kind Guardian, let us hike there!"

"I think it would be a very good thing to do," approved Mrs. Bryan. "But it isn't for me to settle. You'll have to have a business meeting to decide that, 97 and to decide another thing that nobody's thought of."

"Ways and means?" ventured Adelaide, perhaps because they had been in her mind, too.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Bryan. "We haven't enough in the treasury to pay expenses, even if we only stay a little while. It's for you all to decide whether you want to get the money from your parents for the provisions, or whether you will earn it."

"Earn it?" asked Winona, "How could we, in such a little while?"

"You'll have to work that out yourselves," replied Mrs. Bryan, as she usually did.

"Well, I can't ask dad for *much* money," Louise frankly confessed. "Times are hard, and me poor father needs his gold for the lit-tul ones at home!"

"Well, of course it's premature," hesitated Helen, looking up, "because the rest aren't here."

"Go on, anyway," said the others eagerly.

"Well, I don't see why we shouldn't have a bread and cake and preserve sale," she went on. "I'm treasurer, you know, and I'm sure we have enough money on hand for materials. People will buy things to eat when they won't buy anything else. I'm sure, too, that we could get Black's drug-store to sell in."

"We'd need more than one cake-sale, wouldn't we?" asked Winona.

"We could have two--or even four!" asserted Louise boldly. "We needn't go for two weeks yet, anyway. It will only be the last of July then. We could have sales Wednesdays and Saturdays." 98

"And get orders beforehand, and make what people want!" said Louise, "Oh, I'd love to do that!"

"Will it cost much?" asked Adelaide.

"The sale?" said Louise.

"No, the trip."

"Not a good deal," said Mrs. Bryan. "We have the land free, of course. We shall have to buy tents--let me see, there are twelve in the Camp Fire, aren't there? And there will be six or eight Blue Birds. We'll need ten tents, and then there'll be the provisions. What they cost will depend on how long you decide to stay. If you hike there and back there won't be any railroad fare. As for clothes, you'll need blouses and dark skirts or bloomers, and tennis shoes--but all that can wait till the business meeting. Marie is secretary--she and Edith and Dorothy and Anna Morris are going to be here getting luncheon to-morrow. There had better be a meeting here to-morrow afternoon. I'll telephone Marie after supper."

Eight very happy girls of assorted sizes cleared away the supper and washed the dishes and made the kitchen shine. Even Puppums, bulging with contraband chops, was more amiable than usual, and slept placidly in all the places where he was most in the way.

"I'm going to take my banjo," planned Louise.

"I shall take pounds and pounds of modelling clay," said Helen enthusiastically.

"Edith has a mandolin," volunteered Lucy Hillis.

"Everybody that has a musical instrument had better bring it," said Mrs. Bryan. 99

"We'll contribute a very fine dog with a stunning howl!" said Winona mischievously.

"That dog isn't a musical instrument, he's a famine-breeder!" said Louise; then paused, for Mrs. Bryan went into the dining-room to telephone Marie Hunter. Edith Hillis was at Marie's, and both girls were as excited over the cake-sale idea as the rest.

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Next afternoon the whole Camp Fire had a business meeting at Mrs. Bryan's. Besides the girls who had originally belonged, five others had joined. It was a very pleasant meeting, helped out with afternoon cocoa and sandwiches that the lunch-getters had prepared. They discussed ways and means till they could scarcely hear themselves think. Never was there such an unanimous meeting. For everybody wanted to go camping, and to go camping money is needed. So three committees were appointed, one to buy materials, another to borrow an eligible drug-store for Saturday, and a third to attend to advertising. The girls were to meet Friday, and each take home what materials she needed. Saturday morning the materials were to be returned to the drug-store in the shape of salable things to eat. It even occurred to one genius to allot to each girl a certain thing to make.

"It's a good thing to do," she said modestly--it was Dorothy. "Once our Sunday-school class gave a sale, and every single girl brought chocolate cake."

"I remember that," said Marie. "But it turned out all right." 100

"Oh, yes," said Dorothy laughing. "We hung a sign in the window, 'Chocolate cake sale!' and it all went. But it mightn't have!"

So Marie made out a careful list of what each girl was to make.

"I don't see how we'll ever sell all those!" she said, looking worried.

But they did. People always will buy bread and cake and muffins. At the end of the first sale, on Saturday, Edith Hillis, who was on duty, put seventeen dollars in her hand-bag to take up to Helen.

"There are orders, too," she reported. "We have eight dozen parkerhouse rolls and two dozen and a half biscuits promised for different lunches and suppers next week, beside jam orders. Here's the list."

"That ought to be five dollars more," counted Helen.

Edith forgot for once to smooth her dress and pat her curls in the excitement of success.

"Three more as good and we'll have all the money we need!" she declared.

And, as a matter of fact, the three following sales were better than the first. Adelaide developed a real talent for jelly-making, and the orders for that alone helped a good deal. At the crowning sale, the next one to the last, they made twenty-one dollars, and eighteen and nineteen at the other two.

Mrs. Bryan went off to the city to buy tents, and was understood to have come back with ten that were marvellous bargains. The Camp Fire damed all its 101 stockings, and tidied itself, and was collectively very good at home, so as to leave a pleasant last impression.

Mrs. Merriam lamented that she was going to be very, very lonely, for Tom was going out camping with the Scouts only a day or so later than Winona and Florence were to go with Camp Karonya. As for Puppums, there were many arguments about him, for Tom thought he would make a fine mascot, and so did Winona and Florence. It was finally settled by the fact that another of the Scouts owned a collie and was going to take him; and Puppums, while he was a friendly dog in the main, and indeed had quite a social circle of his own, bit collies whenever he saw them. So there were bound to be fights if Puppums went with Tom, and it was decided that the girls should have him.

Nobody thought there were going to be any more members added to the Camp. But one afternoon, while Winona was out in her back garden with Louise and Helen and a medicine ball, Nataly Lee from next door came calling. The three girls were dusty and tousled; Helen's braid was half-undone, the ribbon was off Winona's curls, and Louise, who had just fallen full-length across the nasturtiums in a vain effort to get the ball, had a streak of mould and grass-stain from her shoulder to the hem of her skirt. Altogether, they were as badly mussed a trio as you could wish to see, when Tom came out the back door toward them.

He said nothing whatever, but he bore high in his hand the very largest tray the house afforded, and in its black and banded centre reposed a small calling-card 102 which said "Miss Nataly Lee. The Cedars." He made a low bow, and held the tray toward his sister.

Winona took off the card, and the three girls looked at it together.

"Where do you suppose she keeps the cedars?" asked Louise in a stage whisper. "There aren't any next door."

"Sh-h. That must be her ancestral estate," surmised Helen respectfully. "Oh, dear, Winnie, I can't go in this way, to a call that has a card and all that!"

"Of course you can," said Winona cheerfully. "I did worse than that when I went calling on *her*. I didn't take any card at all. To be frank with you, I haven't any. Anyway, she received me with her wrapper on, and that's no better than grass-stains."

"Come on--be sports!" urged Tom, waving his tray. "I think she's come to say that she's willing to be welcomed in your midst."

"How do you know?" asked all three girls at once.

"I don't know--I only think so, because Billy told me," said Tom.

"We certainly look dreadful!" mourned Helen, but they all brushed each other off and straightened each other, and trotted into the house.

Nataly did not look as if she had ever seen a negligee. She had on white gloves and a veil, and carried a card-case, and altogether, except that her hair was down and her skirt short, she might very well have been grown up. 103

"It's a charming day," she began when she had been introduced to Helen and Louise.

"It certainly is," agreed Louise, "and a lot too nice to stay in the house. Don't you want to come on out in the back yard

with us and play ball?"

But Nataly declined. She said she didn't think it would be good for her gloves.

Then there was a pause, because nobody could think of anything to say. Finally Winona began:

"Tom says you think you might like to join our Camp Fire, after all. Do you think you would?"

Nataly looked as if she was about to take a dreadful plunge, but she said, "Yes, I believe I would like to. The doctor says I ought to be out in the open air, and you are, aren't you?"

"We certainly are!" said Louise. "That's where we were when you came to call. Want to come?"

Louise was visibly fretting at having to stay indoors, and finally Winona had to lead the way out to the back garden again. And, naturally, the first thing to meet their eyes was the big black tray, with Nataly's own card fatally conspicuous in the very middle of it. Winona tried to steer her around it, but it was no use. Your own name is one thing you are sure to see or hear before anything else. Winona, talking sixteen to the dozen about everything she could think of, picked up the card furtively and put it in her pocket. Unfortunately it wasn't possible to pocket the tray.

However, they arranged with Nataly that she go camping with them. She could not join till the next 104 monthly ceremonial meeting, but there was to be one soon after camp was pitched. So it was settled.

"I wonder who she'll be friends with specially?" said Helen after she had gone. "She doesn't seem to fit into us, somehow."

"We'll have to make her fit," said Winona gayly. "To tell you the truth Helen, she reminds me of a kitten I knew once. It belonged to three old maiden ladies. It didn't know how to be a kitten at all--the poor little thing thought it was a cat!"

"Well, perhaps Nataly'll turn out a kitten, but I doubt it, even with you helping," said Louise. "Come on, let's finish our game."

## 105 CHAPTER TEN

As the clock struck eight-thirty Monday morning, on the last week in July, one Guardian, one dog, thirteen big girls and seven small ones lined up for their long-anticipated hike to Camp Karonya. They planned to walk half the distance that day, sleep at a farmhouse about half-way to the woods, and finish the next day at their destination. They were all in middies, with dark skirts, and the most comfortable slippers money could buy--it hurts to hike in tight shoes. They had hats, of course, but Edith Hillis, in addition, carried a parasol. Each girl carried her own night-things and drinking-cup and luncheon. The provisions, and the rest of the baggage, had gone over to the camping-place in Mr. Bryan's automobile and Louise Lane's father's delivery-wagon.

Early as it was, quite a lot of people were out to see the girls off, and even Puppums curvetted proudly as he noticed the attention he was getting, for he was a very vain dog. He might well be vain, because Louise had attached a large label to his collar which said "Camp Fire Dog," and he was not allowed to chew it off.

They walked slowly, and it felt very much like going to a picnic guaranteed to last forever. Presently someone started a marching song, and everyone joined in. They walked easily on, having a very good time as 106 they went; and before they knew it noon had come, and it was time to have lunch.

They were near a meadow by this time, a big green meadow with trees at its edge, and they all sat down under the trees and unpacked their sandwiches and ate. Some of the girls had thermos bottles with them, with hot cocoa, but most of them preferred the concentrated lemonade Mrs. Bryan had brought along, mixed with water from a nice little brook which had been kind enough to flow quite near them.

"If it's all going to be like this, won't it be lovely?" said Winona, her eyes shining, as she took a large bite of sandwich, and then fed a generous share of the rest to Puppums, who lay quiveringly near her.

"It is nice," said Helen more quietly. "I hope we'll have weather like this the whole time ... gracious, what's that?"

"That" was a distant squeal. Winona looked hastily around her to see what the Blue Birds were doing. But there were no Blue Birds there. The seven little girls were out of sight, but not out of hearing, for it was evidently one of them who had made the noise.

Winona and Adelaide jumped up and ran, but Louise and Edith sat placidly on.

"They *will* howl," said Louise. "There's no use always chasing after them."

But when Winona and Adelaide arrived at the place the squeals had come from they were very glad they had done the "chasing."

Florence, with little Lucy Hillis holding her, was 107 sitting on the ground screaming steadily. The other girls were huddled together in a frightened group a little way off.

"What is it? What is it, Lucy?" cried Winona, frightened. Florence was making such a noise that it was no use asking her. Lucy Hillis, who was one of those quiet, old-fashioned little girls who always keep their heads, looked up, still holding Florence's wrist.

"Florence's cut herself," she said. "I'm afraid it's a bad cut. I don't dare let go of it."

Winona flung herself down by Florence and put her hands above Lucy's shaking little ones, which then, and not till then, let go.

"Get me a stick, Lucy, quick--a strong one!" she said.

Lucy was back with the stick before Winona was through speaking. Winona pulled off her tie, that useful silk scarf of hers which had helped Edith out of the water, and bound it above Florence's cut, twisting it tight with the stick. Then she asked Adelaide to tie Florence's wrist again, below the cut. She did not want to take any chances, and she did not know yet whether it was a vein or an artery that Florence had hurt.

Then she sent Lucy flying for Mrs. Bryan, while she and Adelaide made Florence keep still.

"That Lucy child keeps her head," said Adelaide approvingly.

"It wasn't *her* wrist that got cut!" said Florence indignantly, stopping her sobs. 108

"How did it happen, Florence?" asked her sister. "Tell us--but don't stir. Nobody knows what will happen if your wrist starts bleeding again."

"Well, we were being Indian chiefs," began Florence, "an'--an' I was out on the warpath, going to scalp Molly Green. And I ran, and Molly ran, an' I fell over a tree-root and the knife cut my wrist."

"The knife!" said Winona, for nobody had mentioned a knife before. "Where did you get a knife?"

Florence hung her head.

"I--I borrowed your penknife out of your knapsack when you laid it on the grass to get lunch out of it."

"The knife? I didn't."

"No; the knapsack," said Florence meekly. "An'--an' oh, *dear* sister, I'm so sorry!"

Winona could scarcely help laughing, worried as she was. When Florence had been naughty she always became suddenly very affectionate. At other times she wasn't, especially.

"I'm sorry, too," she said gravely. "I don't know what Mrs. Bryan will say to you, nor mother, when she hears about it."

"Let me see," said Mrs. Bryan behind them. She had hurried over at Lucy's summons.

"Oh, is it--is it an artery?" breathed Winona, as Mrs. Bryan bent over the wounded arm.

Mrs. Bryan laughed. "Nothing of the sort, you foolish child," she said. "It's only a deep cut. It didn't even strike a large vein." 109

"Oh, I'm *so* glad!" said Winona, drawing a long breath.

She ran off to get her First Aid kit out of her knapsack, and, coming back, presently had Florence bandaged up scientifically, and much impressed with the importance of what she had done.

"Will I have to be carried on a stretcher?" the little girl wanted to know.

"Not a bit of it," said Mrs. Bryan briskly. "You will have to walk on your own two feet, like any other naughty little girl."

"Oh, was I naughty?" said Florence cheerfully. "I forgot that!"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Bryan, "you were very naughty. I think we shall have to confine you to camp for two days, when we get there."

"All right," said Florence complacently, "but now please can't I be carried on a stretcher? I should think I might!"

"All right, let's," said Louise, who had come up along with the rest of the girls, in Mrs. Bryan's wake. "Only remember, Florence Merriam, once you get up on that stretcher you have to stay there."

"Of course!" said Florence indignantly.

By this time all the girls were clustered about the interesting invalid, and the stretcher idea struck them all as a very fine one. It would help them to put the Wood Craft they had been learning into practice. Winona picked up her gory penknife, and began to wash it in the brook before she started to cut wood with it.

"Oh," said Florence plaintively, "I thought you'd always keep it that way, to remember me by!"

"I'll have chance enough to remember you without that," replied Winona feelingly, and went off to look for poles with the others. Edith Hillis pulled her embroidery out of her knapsack and mounted guard over the Blue Birds, who were, however, a rather subdued flock by now.

Meanwhile the rest of the girls picked out four saplings which grew at the edge of the wood beyond the meadow, and nicked them at the bottom patiently till they fell. The next thing was to tie them together. But nobody had anything to



do it with, till Mrs. Bryan remembered a bunch of leather thongs she carried.

"I always have at least two along for extra shoe-laces, when I'm camping," she explained, "and they always come in use for something else before the time is over. An old guide up in the Adirondacks told me to do that, and it's always a good thing for campers to do."

The thongs bound the saplings into a frame, and Louise secured them to a knot that was newly learned, and the pride of her life.

"That can't come out," she said, surveying it with pleasure, for learning to do it had earned her a much-valued bead.

For the covering of the stretcher Adelaide produced an old gray shawl from her knapsack. 111

"Father made me bring it," she explained rather shamefacedly.

"Just the thing!" said Mrs. Bryan heartily.

They wrapped it round the frame, and it went around three times, being large, so that a couple of pins held it fast. Then they lifted the gratified Florence on to it and started off down the road again. They had cleared up the fragments of their luncheon first, and buried neatly all the scraps and debris, so that there were no excursion-looking boxes and crusts littering their resting-place.

The girls took turns carrying the stretcher, and as there were fourteen of them, counting Mrs. Bryan, many hands made light work. As Louise had prophesied would happen, after a little while Florence became restless. The other Blue Birds were having lovely times frolicking all over the road, chasing butterflies and picking flowers and playing with the dog. Florence found it rather stupid to sit in solitary grandeur on a stretcher, and listen to what Winona and Adelaide, before her, and Marie and Edith, behind her, were saying about their own affairs. So at the first stop to change bearers she wanted to get down. But Mrs. Bryan was firm.

"No, indeed," she said, "the first thing Blue Birds must learn is to obey orders and keep promises. You promised to stay up there till evening, Florence, and you must do it."

Florence pouted, but she stayed. She really had lost quite a little blood in her adventure with her 112 sister's penknife, and, though Mrs. Bryan did not tell her so, the walk might have been too much for her. She wriggled and yawned, and once sat up straight, till her bearers requested her to lie still. But presently she had a companion in misery.

It was nearly the end of the journey, and the farmhouse where the girls planned to stay the night was in sight. Winona, strolling on ahead, saw a small gray kitten prowling along the side of the road. It was a most unhappy kitten; it looked as if it hadn't had a square meal since it could remember, and there was an ugly-looking place on its side as if something had worried it. It limped a little, too, poor little cat, and altogether a more forlorn animal would have been hard to find. But Winona pounced on it.

"Oh, you poor little cat!" she cried. "Look, Helen, some horrid dog has hurt it."

"Oh, don't pick it up!" said Marie. "It may have something awful."

"Smallpox, maybe?" inquired Winona sarcastically. "Nonsense, Marie, the poor little thing's been worried by a dog, and it hasn't had enough to eat, that's all. I'm going to adopt it."

And in spite of Marie's protests she picked it up and wrapped it in her handkerchief, and carried it back to Florence, who was wriggling on her stretcher, and wishing that she hadn't demanded that evidence of invalidism.

"Here, Florence," said Winona, "hold this kitty till we get to the farmhouse." 113

"Oh, a kitty! Poor little thing!" cried Florence, adopting the cat on the spot, and letting it cuddle down by her, which it was willing enough to do, for it seemed to be as tired as it was hungry.

"Are you sure----" began Marie again.

Marie's father was a professor in the high-school, and as a result she knew about more kinds of germs than the rest had ever heard of.

"Mother lets us bring in hurt animals, always, and look after them," said Winona. "Germs can't get you if you're careful."

We can wash our hands in disinfectant as soon as we get to the farmhouse. I have some in my first-aid kit."

"And what are you going to do with the cat?" asked Louise, coming up to the other side of the stretcher and surveying the much-discussed animal without great affection.

"Keep it, if Mrs. Bryan doesn't mind, as it doesn't belong to anyone," said Winona coolly. "It ought to make a good camp mascot."

Louise eyed the kitten again--they were nearly at the farmhouse by this time.

"It isn't exactly my idea of a mascot," she said candidly. "What about Puppums? I thought he was elected to the position."

"Well, then, the kitty can be the under-mascot," said Winona undauntedly. "Anyway, when I get through nursing her she'll be a perfectly good cat--see if she isn't!" 114

"I doubt it!" said Louise and Marie together, as if they had been practising a duet.

"Wait!" said Winona as they mounted the steps.

There were plenty of rooms, for the farm people took boarders all August; but even so, there were not enough for nearly twenty people. However, Mrs. Norris, the farmer's wife, had been prepared beforehand for the descent, and she had extra cots made up and ready in all the rooms, and unlimited hot water for baths.

Winona did not come in when the others did. She sat down on the porch floor, pulled out her first-aid kit for the second time that day, sent Florence in for a basin of warm water, and set about doctoring the kitten. She sponged off the torn place in its side, and the little hurt in one of its hind legs that had made it limp. This last was only a scratch, but it had stiffened. She rubbed salve in the hurt places. Then she bandaged the cat's leg very successfully. But when it came to tying up the side--for the cat would certainly have licked the salve off if she could--it wasn't so simple. There wasn't anything to fasten the bandage to. Finally she wound it round and round the meek little animal, and sewed it up on top. The cat looked as if it had on a large and fashionable sash, but it did not object. Then Winona gave it some evaporated cream out of a can in her knapsack, watched it while it ate, which it did till the belt tightened dangerously, and took it into the house with her. Florence took the basin back to the place she had gotten it from. 115

"Does this kitten belong to you?" Winona asked the landlady, who was hurrying about a long table in the dining-room, putting dishes full of steaming things on the table.

"Bless my soul, no!" she answered, stopping with a pan of baked beans poised in mid-air. "Why, I do believe that's the kitten that belonged to Medarys, down the road, and they moved away last week. Well, poor little thing, the dogs must have got after it. It's a mercy it got away at all."

"People who abandon cats that way ought to be left out in a wilderness themselves, without anything to eat," said Mrs. Bryan warmly, as she came up behind them.

"Ain't it so?" said the landlady. "I'll get somebody to drown the poor little thing to-morrow."

"Oh, no! I'll keep it if it's nobody's," Winona said eagerly. "You don't mind, do you, Mrs. Bryan?"

"If it hasn't mange," said Mrs. Bryan prudently.

"It hasn't," Winona and Florence assured her together. "It's only hurt."

"Very well," said the Guardian; and the Merriams ran off to wash their hands in disinfectant and straighten themselves generally for supper. They left the cat in their room.

That certainly was a supper. When you have walked all day in the open you feel as if you could eat a house, if nothing tenderer offers itself. Even Nataly Lee, who was genuinely tired to death, was hungry. The girls stood behind their chairs for a 116 moment, saying one of the Camp Fire graces softly in unison. Then they sat down, and ate as if lunch had been only a dream.

After supper the hostess showed them her long parlor and invited them to make themselves at home. But they were all too sleepy to frolic. Louise, who was untirable, did indeed unsling her banjo from across her shoulder and try to sing,

but she interrupted herself in the middle of "Nellie Gray" with a gigantic yawn. The Blue Birds were all asleep in their chairs, and had to be marched off to bed half-conscious. It was only eight, but the elder sisters and cousins who took them up liked the looks of the white cots very much, and--well, it seemed so useless to go downstairs again, some way. So Winona and Adelaide and Louise and Elizabeth, and Marie, who was looking after such Blue Birds as had not sisters along, simply went to bed, too, when they had attended to their charges. The other girls sat sleepily downstairs for awhile, waiting for their friends to come back. And then they, too, came upstairs and went to bed--and by eight-thirty there was nothing to be heard of seven Blue Birds, thirteen Camp Fire Girls, a dog and a cat, but twenty even breathings from as many cots, an occasional snore from the back porch where Puppums was tied, and a loud, ecstatic purr from the corner of Winona's cot, where the Medary's late kitten was privately spending the night.

## 117 CHAPTER ELEVEN

Next morning by eight Camp Karonya was up and eating a large breakfast. The girls sang a cheer to Mrs. Norris when they were done, and formed for their march again. Most of them had brought enough food for two lunches, but Mrs. Norris could not be brought to think so, and insisted on piling up provisions enough for a regiment. They compromised, on several slices of roast lamb apiece, and enough bread and butter to go around and leave some over.

Winona slipped into the little general store near the farmhouse, and bargained for some more cans of evaporated milk for her under-mascot, the kitten. It was travelling in Florence's knapsack to-day, and Florence's things were distributed between Winona and two of the other girls. It proved to be a very frisky kitten by nature, now that its fears of being hungry and homeless were gone. Winona had to sew its bandage on again at noon.

"I don't know how it is," she said perplexedly. "It's certainly a fatter kitten, and yet its bandage is too big!"

"Poor thing! Take it off altogether!" advised Helen. "Pussy will get well just as soon without it."

So they ripped off the bandage, and the kitten seemed very grateful. Its hurt looked like scarcely more than a scratch now. 118

"If she's going to be a camp mascot she ought to have a name," suggested Florence.

Winona laughed. "I'm going to call her Hike," she said. "She was hiking when we met her, poor pussy, and so were we."

So Hike the Camp Cat she became. And--to anticipate--when she had been living on evaporated cream and other luxuries a few days, she turned into a plump and handsome Maltese kitten with charming manners.

The girls arrived at their camping-place at about five that day. The big limousine that belonged to Helen's father, and the big electric delivery wagon which Louise's father had contributed, stood waiting for them on the road nearest the clearing in the woods, where they were to make their camp.

"Do you mean to say we're going to eat all that?" asked Edith Hillis helplessly, as she caught sight of the piled provisions in the delivery wagon.

"Well, we shan't have to eat the tents and cots in the limousine," said Winona. "At least, I hope not. But I think we will manage the rest. I was on the committee that figured out how much we would want for three weeks of camping, and I'm sure there's no more here than we ordered."

"I have the list," said Helen.

"Then check the things off, dear, as the men lift them out," said Mrs. Bryan.

So Helen read from her list as the barrels and boxes were carried away, and the girls listened in awe, for this is what she read: 119

One and a half barrels of flour.

Fifteen pounds shortening.

("It's a special kind," explained Helen. "You can use it for cakes, as well as frying and other things.")

Fifteen pounds rice.

Fifteen pounds beans.

Five pounds baking-powder.

Three sides of bacon.

Sixty-five pounds of sugar.

Ten pounds of cocoa.

Case and a half of evaporated milk.

("And the extra cans Winnie bought to support the cat on," interrupted Louise. "We can steal those if the worst comes to the worst.")

Two barrels of potatoes.

Six jugs of molasses.  
One dozen cans each peas and corn.  
Eight pounds of salt pork.

"All present and accounted for," said Mrs. Bryan, as the men who had been loaned with the wagon rolled the barrels and carried the boxes off to a little tarred shack near the spring. "We'll have to buy butter and eggs and fresh fruit and vegetables as we go along. They'll keep in the spring, for it seems to be ice-cold."

"And did just things to eat for us cost all that beautiful eighty dollars we made at all the cake-sales?" asked Florence indignantly. She had helped make fudge for those sales, and she felt as if they had been her personal venture.

"It came to about fifty-five dollars, wholesale," said Helen, looking down at the itemized list she held. "We figured out that the other thirty dollars would just about keep us in the green things and dairy things we had to have. The corn and peas are in case we're weatherbound and can't get fresh vegetables."

"And how long did you say we could live on that perfect mountain of food?" inquired Nataly Lee's mournful voice from where she was lying on the grass with her knapsack under her head.

"Three weeks, no more," said Helen briskly. "If we want to stay we shall have to earn more money."

"I think we could," mused Winona thoughtfully.

"But what about the tents?" asked Elizabeth curiously. She was a quiet, competent little thing. "I don't see where the money for them comes in."

"That's the most splendid thing of all," smiled Mrs. Bryan, as the men began to slide ten dusty-looking tents out of the wagon. "Mr. Gedney, the Scoutmaster, called up Mr. Bryan just before I was going shopping for tents, and told me about these in case we wanted them. They belonged to the National Guard, and the State had condemned them, because they were shabbier than some politician or other liked them to be. So the Scouts were offered them at a ridiculously low price, if they would only take enough. Rather than let such a bargain go by the Scouts took them all, though there were more than they needed. And Mr. Gedney says we may use these, and needn't pay for them till next winter."

The girls agreed that it certainly was luck, and followed on down to see the tents put up--ten little brown tents in a row, with two cots and a box-dressing-table in each.

"You'll have to stow your clothes underneath the cots," explained Mrs. Bryan. "And I expect each of you to learn how to put up and take down her own tent."

"Beads!" exploded Louise.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Bryan.

"We only have extra under-things," said Marie, "and one dress-up frock apiece, besides our camp clothes and ceremonial dresses. We don't need much room."

By the time the tents had been assigned and the cots made up, supper was ready, and Mrs. Bryan summoned them to it by blowing a clear little whistle she wore. The girls had expected to turn to and get their own supper. So they were very much surprised to find Mrs. Bryan's black maid Grace, and Mrs. Hunter's Jenny smiling behind the long trestles in the mess-tent, setting steaming dishes up and down the table.

"This is a special treat," explained Mrs. Bryan. "We're all tired to-night, and we hadn't time to do any cooking ourselves anyway, so I let Grace and Jenny do it. But to-morrow morning camp life begins. We'll draw lots for assignment to duties, after supper."

The girls stood up behind their seats for a moment and said grace, then sat down, and ate as if they had never seen food before. It was a very civilized meal, soup, roasts and dessert, all sent over by the mothers in the tonneau of the Bryan car, as the cooks and the provisions had been. It tasted good, but everyone looked forward with joy to real camp cooking.

"Wait till you see how I can broil venison steak," threatened Louise, as she ate a very large helping of despised roast beef from a mere unromantic cow.

"Where'll you get the venison? Pick it?" called back Winona from the other side of the table.

"No, she's going to grow it!" said Elizabeth.

"Nothing of the kind!" said Louise cheerfully. "All you do is to go out with a gun, and stalk till you find a magnificent moose feeding peacefully among the underbrush."

"Suppose there isn't any underbrush?" inquired Edith's languid voice from the table's other end.

"Then you carry some out with you and scatter it around for the deer to eat out of," said Louise undisturbed. "Don't interrupt the lesson on natural history, please. You stand, moved by the beauty of the sight, for a long time. Then, recalled to yourself by the thought of the seven starving little Blue Birds at home, you draw your revolver to your shoulder and are about to fire."

"Sure it's a revolver?" asked Winona skeptically.

"Well, your pistol, then--they're all the same thing. Just then the moose lifts his head and looks at you mournfully out of his large, deer-like eyes. You almost relent. But you nerve yourself and fire--one crashing shot between the eyes. Then you throw the moose across your shoulders and carry it home--and there's your venison steak." 123

"It sounds more like a venison mis-steak to me," said Winona. "I suppose you're going hunting to-morrow morning, Louise?"

But Louise had just arrived at her dessert.

"I scorn to reply," was all she said as she retired into her ice-cream.

After supper the girls lay about on the grass, while Winona and Marie and Mrs. Bryan put slips of paper in a double boiler. The girls drew lots to decide which should be camp cooks and camp orderlies for the first week: four for the cooking, four for buying provisions and policing the camp, and four for the dish-washing and preparing vegetables.

"That leaves one girl over," spoke up Adelaide, sitting up under a tree.

Mrs. Bryan shook her head. "No," she said, "it doesn't, because somebody has to look after the Blue Birds every week. I'm going to appoint Marie Hunter, because she hasn't any small sisters, and it won't be such an old story to her to look after little girls. So there are just enough people to go around. Rise up and draw lots out of the boiler, girls!"

"I'd rather wash every dish in camp than chaperon the infants!" said Louise aside; and drew a slip marked "Dish-Washing" on the spot. "If I got all my wishes as quickly as that, how nice it would be!" she sighed, and lay down with her arm around little Bessie. Louise had not a passion for washing dishes.

Then Adelaide drew a cooking slip. So did Winona and Elizabeth and Lilian Brown, one of the 124 girls who had joined later. Anna Morris, Dorothy Gray and Edith Hillis drew the other dish-washing slips and Helen Bryan, Nataly Lee, Gladys Williams and the other Brown sister, Gertrude, were assigned the police and provision duty. At the end of the week everybody was to shift to something else.

"It seems to me the camp orderlies have the best of it," said Helen, yawning. "What do we do, Nannie?"

"You see that everyone remembers to make up her bed in the morning, you sweep out the camp, carry water from the spring. You have to see, too, that the camp is kept in fruit and vegetables--in other words, walk to a farmhouse about a mile away every other day to buy provisions. We mustn't break into our canned goods except in an emergency. You are really the people who are responsible for the camp's running smoothly."

"Carry water!" said Nataly with a gasp. "Won't we get our clothes wet?"

"Wear a waterproof, love," said Louise. "I'm going to ask to have Nataly assigned to bring me all my water for dishes," she whispered to Winona, beside her. "I'm sure it will have an elevating effect on her character."

"Oh, don't, Louise!" whispered Winona back. "Suppose you'd spent your young life on a sofa, reading 'Beautiful Coralie's Doom,' you wouldn't feel able to carry water either!"

"Then I wouldn't go Camp Firing," said Louise conclusively. 125

Next morning the camp cooks were up at six. Breakfast was to be at seven-thirty, but the girls were so afraid of being too late that they devised an elaborate system of strings, whereby the earliest awake was to jerk her strings, and wake all the others. Winona, Lilian Brown and Elizabeth were on the ground by a quarter past six, but, although they had all jerked their strings faithfully, no Adelaide appeared. Finally they descended in a body on the tent which held Adelaide and her little sister Frances.

"Well, would you look at that!" said Winona in an indignant whisper.

The other girls cautiously lifted the tent-flap and stuck in their heads.

Frances slept placidly on one cot, her little freckled face half buried in the pillow. On the other, quite as fast asleep, lay Adelaide--and there was not a string tied to her anywhere!

"Well, if that isn't the *limit!*" said Elizabeth and Lilian in one breath, and Elizabeth reached down to the pail of water which the orderlies had faithfully set outside each tent door before they went to bed. She tilted the cold water on her handkerchief, and dropped it wetly on Adelaide's face. It wasn't a wet sponge, but it did nearly as well, as an awakener.

"What--where--nonsense, Lonny, *don't!*" said Adelaide, waving her arms, and finally sitting up.

"It isn't Lonny; it's us," said Winona coldly, "and why on earth did you untie the strings, when all the rest of us had them to get up by?" 126

Adelaide looked ashamed.

"I couldn't sleep all tied up that way," she confessed. "I felt like a spider or a fly or something. So I tied them on the cot. But I thought when you pulled them the cot would jar, and wake me!"

"It might have," said Winona, "if you'd tied them on your own cot!"

Adelaide, looking in the direction of Winona's pointing finger, found out why she had not wakened. In her sleepiness the night before, she had fastened her strings to a large twig that grew out of the ground beside her bed!

"I ought to be drowned!" said Adelaide ashamedly. "But if you girls will wait till I get bathed and dressed, I'll wash all the dishes to pay for this!"

"You won't do any such thing," said the others.

So they sat sociably outside Adelaide's tent till she was dressed and joined them. Then they started out valiantly for the cooking-place.

When they reached it a very cheering surprise awaited them, for there was Mrs. Bryan seated on a pile of kindling, with a box of matches on her lap and a pleasant smile on her face.

"I thought you mightn't know just where to begin," she said, "so I thought I'd come help, this first morning. The first thing is the fire. Do any of you know how to make a cooking-fire in the open?"

Adelaide didn't, neither did Elizabeth. Winona thought she knew, but wasn't sure, and Lilian had once seen it done, but had forgotten how. 127

"I'd better show you all, then," said their Guardian briskly. "The first thing you do is to get together two big green logs that won't burn. Roll them together so they form a big V."

"Logs that *won't* burn! What a queer beginning!" said Winona, whose idea of building a fire was heaping a bonfire up with sticks till it flamed high.

But they tugged and pushed till they had a couple of newly-felled trees at angles to each other, in a hollow place protected from the wind.

"Now, you build your fire inside that V," explained Mrs. Bryan, "and, you see, you can put the cocoa-pan up at the beginning of the crotch, and the portable oven and the frying-pan down where the division is wider."

"Simple as anything," said Winona, "once you know how."

And they scattered to find wood. The sticks lay about in plenty--later they were hard to find without going into the woods which encircled the camping-place--and Mrs. Bryan showed them how to commence a fire by laying small pieces of brushwood criss-cross at the bottom, and piling on heavier wood till all was aflame. Presently they had a solid, roaring fire. They sat back and let it burn down to coals. By then they had the flour-barrel opened, the bacon sliced, and the water ready to put on the cocoa. Winona made biscuits, it seemed to her, in mountains, while Elizabeth got out the butter and knives and forks, and set the table.

"You can't cut out biscuits enough for twenty people with a cutter, child!" advised Mrs. Bryan. 128

"Just take the butcher-knife, and cut the whole mass of dough into squares, after you've laid it on the floured floors of the oven!"

But the bacon had to be sliced, and this took longer; and Adelaide's job, looking after the cocoa, proved nerve-racking, because cocoa will burn at the slightest chance. But everything came right, and by the time the other girls were astir their breakfast was awaiting them, piping hot; crispy bacon, hot biscuits and butter, with jam they had made themselves, and cocoa.

"Jam's an extra," Mrs. Bryan warned them. "It happened to be left over from the sales, so I brought it. You'll have to go to work and make some more out of berries you pick."

After breakfast, Marie, the keeper of the Blue Birds' Nest, said that she was going to put two Blue Birds to work at each of the camp shifts, and leave the odd one to be Mrs. Bryan's personal Bird and attendant. Mrs. Bryan was to choose her attendant, who was to run her errands for her and help her generally. But she refused to do it.

"I like them all so much," she said, "that I can't pick out a special one."

So they counted out for the honor, and the choice for the first week fell on little Lucy Hillis. The others, as far as it could be done, worked with their own sisters.

After breakfast, while the dish-washing brigade wrestled with the cups, plates and spoons that twenty people leave behind them, the cooks held a council. They decided that it would be easier if two girls got 129 each meal in turn: Winona and Adelaide the dinner, Elizabeth and Lilian the supper, and so on. The camp police divided off the same way, and so, eventually, did the dish-washers. Helen, who had the Camp funds in her charge, talked with the girls who were going to market that day. There was twenty-five dollars for three weeks of camp, she explained, and she thought that the safest way would be to allow so much a day, which gave them about a dollar twenty a day to spend. They thought so, too, and presently Nataly and Helen went off in search of the farmhouse which had promised to keep them supplied with perishable provisions.

Winona and Adelaide, freed of any further duties till supper-time, went off exploring. It was a perfect day, bright and breezy and not too hot. Winona half-danced along, singing under her breath. The sun glistened on her pretty hair and lighted up her blue eyes. Adelaide looked at her wistfully.

"I do wish I were you!" she said abruptly.

Winona looked at her in surprise. "Wish you were me? Why, on earth?" she asked. "Isn't it just as nice to be you?"

Adelaide shook her head. "I don't like it much!" she said rebelliously.

"Why not?" asked Winona.

Adelaide shrugged her shoulders.

Winona slipped her arm about her, and pulled her down on a comfortable looking log.

"Let's sit down and talk about it," said she cheerfully.



## 130 CHAPTER TWELVE

Adelaide turned and faced Winona.

"Well, go ahead and talk," she said. "It won't make things any less so." Then suddenly she burst out, "You don't know what it's like. You don't know how it feels never to have anything extra. If I go to a party I'm likely to be the worst-dressed girl there. If I go to school and the girls treat I have to say I don't want any because I can't pay back. I can't invite anybody to meals, because I can't give them extra nice things to eat. And, anyway, the flat's horrid--even the furniture and the carpets are shabby. Lonny and Frances are good, and help, but everything drags. And I just hate *everything*."

"Hate everything!" said Winona soothingly. "Why, of course you don't--you just think you do!"

"It's all right for you to talk," murmured Adelaide miserably. "Everybody's crazy over you--of course they would be. I am myself, and I don't like people generally. You have something about you that would make people like you even if you weren't sweet to them. Everything turns out right for you. I don't see what you wanted to join the Camp Fire for--its rules stuck out all over you before you ever joined."

"Oh, *don't!*" said Winona, blushing. "What rules do you mean? I never kept any rules."

"You know the Law of the Camp Fire: 'Seek beauty; give service; pursue knowledge; be trustworthy; 131 hold on to health; glorify work; be happy.'"

"I don't do all those things," said Winona. "Wish I did! But anybody seeks beauty, and as long as you have to work the only way to get fun out of it is to glorify it. As for the rest, I think they're only rules for getting all there is out of living. I'll tell you, Adelaide,"--Winona sat upright, as if a new thought had struck her--"why don't you see how many of the rules would apply to getting fun out of the things that worry you? When things go wrong at our house mother always says to Florence and Tommy and me, 'Can't you turn it into a game?'"

"Turn shabby furniture and stews and no money into a game?" said Adelaide, as if she thought Winona was crazy.

"Yes!" said Winona undauntedly. "To begin with the stews--well, Adelaide, you don't know one single thing about cooking. There's any amount of things beside stew that you can make out of stewing meat. And don't you remember the cold things we got out of Mrs. Bryan's refrigerator? That was a good supper, wasn't it? If you know how, cooking's fun, or nearly anything."

"If we have more cooking-classes I suppose I could learn how to do more things with the meats and vegetables, or maybe market better," said Adelaide. "But that would only help that one thing."

"You can figure out keeping house just like anything else," said Winona. "All you have to do's to *think!*" 132

Adelaide laughed. "Do you suppose I could think the furniture new?" she asked. "You ought to see it--horrid old brown rep, and a carpet that's worn into white spots!"

But though she laughed, she looked to Winona for the answer with real eagerness.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'd do," suggested Winona thoughtfully--"I don't suppose you would, you're such a haughty Lady Imogene--I'd make a furnishing bee of it, and have a party, and invite all the girls to help you do the flat over. Your father and Lonny would help, wouldn't they?"

"Oh, I guess so," she said.

"Well, then, the girls would help you cover the furniture and stain the floor, and even paper, maybe. And if your father or Lonny could paint the wood-work--or would the landlord?"

"No," said Adelaide, "he won't make repairs. It's not in the lease. And where would I get money for the paint and paper and stain and covers?"

"Earn it!" said Winona. "There are lots of ways. That jam you made for the sales--you could get heaps of orders for that, I know. Oh, I should think it would be lovely to do. I tell you, Adelaide, you may think I'm crazy--but everything's fun, if you'll only remember that it *is* fun!"

"I wonder!" said Adelaide. "But I believe I could make money with jams and preserves if I worked hard at it."

"We've all got to earn some more money soon if 133 we want to stay in the camp longer than three weeks," said Winona, "unless Louise can feed us all on the venison steaks she was talking about last night. If you can make money for the camp you can for yourself!"

Adelaide turned impulsively--they had risen and were going on through the wood--and threw her arms around Winona.

"You certainly are the most comforting girl!" she said. "I don't wonder everybody does what you want them to."

Winona didn't know what to say. It's pleasant to have people say such things to you, but it is embarrassing, too.

"People like you just as much as they do me," said she. "Come on, let's go see if we can find the river we've heard so much about."

They caught hands and ran on through the trees.

The river was not hard to find. Above them it was a broad stream, but just here it wasn't very wide, just a pretty, clear, clean-looking stream, with green banks and some sort of a dock to be seen a little way beyond them. On the dock, when they reached it, was seen to be an elderly native with a pipe, and beside him was moored a rowboat which looked as if it could be rowed. He looked up from his fishing as the girls appeared.

"Morning," he said sociably, "you little girls going down to the village?"

"Good-morning," said Winona. "No, we hadn't thought of it. We might, though. Is there anything we could get for you if we went?" 134

"Well," said the old man, jerking in his line with a good-sized fish on it, "ye-es, there is. I want an ad put in the paper. I guess I could trust you with a quarter to do it with."

"I guess you could," said Winona, smiling. "Will this afternoon do? I don't believe we'd have time now to get there and back before dinner-time." She looked at her wrist-watch. "No, we won't," she said. "It's eleven now."

"Well, this afternoon would do," he said.

So, while the girls looked at the rowboat wishfully, and wondered if they couldn't get enough fish for supper if they had some tackle, the old man adjusted his spectacles, pulled an old envelope out of his pocket, and wrote on it laboriously.

"Do you mind if I read it?" asked Winona, when he was done and had handed it to her.

"Seein's that's what it's for, I dunno's I do," he grunted, grinning pleasantly. Winona and Adelaide took each a corner, and read as follows:

For sale, one rowboat in good condition, with oars. No reasonable offer refused. Apply to John Sloane, R. F. D. 3, village.

They looked at each other, then at the boat. Then both girls exclaimed with one impulse, "Is it this boat?"

"This very rowboat," said Mr. Sloane, eying it with affection. "I don't use it no more. I've got a motor-boat, and them Boy Scouts up the river has got a fine young flock of canoes, so they ain't likely to 135 want to hire it. Anyway, she ain't so young as she was. Good boat, though!"

"And what would you call a reasonable offer?" inquired Winona. "The reason I want to know is that I have just six dollars, and if I could buy a rowboat that way I would."

"Six dollars, hey?" said Mr. Sloane slowly. "That ain't much for a good boat."

"It's all I have to spend on rowboats," said Winona placidly.

"We-el," decided Mr. Sloane, "guess I might's well let you have it!"

And he proceeded to make out a receipt on the spot, on the other half of the envelope he had used for the advertisement.

"It certainly pays to advertise!" he remarked, as he turned his attention again to his fishing-line.

Adelaide and Winona jumped into their boat with delight, and rowed downstream for half a mile. There they were stopped by the beautiful sight of a lot of huckleberry bushes, full of fruit, along the edge of the stream. They both filled their hats, and when these would hold no more they pinned up Winona's skirt in front and filled that--Winona sitting very still thereafter in order not to smash any berries. Then Adelaide rowed back and tied their newly-acquired property to the dock, the use of which was thrown in, and went back to camp with berries enough for dinner. Just before they came within hearing of the others, Adelaide whispered: 136

"Winona, I'm going to try to--to feel that way about things."

Winona squeezed her hand, but there was no time to say anything more, for a horde of small pirates descended on them and carried away the berries.

After dinner the girls lay on the grass and made plans, more or less wild, for getting money to prolong their vacation.

"We can't have a cake-sale," said Marie practically, "because the farmers' wives in the village make all their own baked stuff, and the people at the summer-resort are mostly boarders."

"Oh, please don't let's have any more cake-sales, whether they're profitable or not," said Louise pathetically. "I sold eats for those sales till I used to go to sleep at night and dream I was a wedding-cake myself."

"All right, then," soothed Helen, "you shan't ever have such dreadful dreams again, you poor little thing!"

"Well, what shall we do, then?" asked Edith Hillis pulling her yellow curls over her shoulder and examining them as if she had never seen them before.

"When you want money," remarked Mrs. Bryan, "you have to sell something, either your services, or your manufactures, or your talents."

"In other words," said Winona, "work for people, or make things to sell them, or have an entertainment."

"Precisely," said the Guardian.

"Then let's start at the beginning," offered Winona, "and everybody try to think what she can do best in 137 the way of work, and whether anybody'd want them to!"

"One thing," reminded Marie, "we can't live by taking in each other's washing, so to speak. We'll have to scheme to get some of their hard-earned butter-and-egg money away from the farmers' wives, or else prey on the summer-resorters."

"We expect to give it right back to them for butter and eggs," said Adelaide. "Whatever we do we might as well take it out in trade!"

After that nobody seemed to have any more ideas. Everyone sat silently and thought very hard; till Louise jumped up with a yelp of impatience that woke Puppums from his after-dinner nap, and made even Hike the Camp Cat open one green eye.

"Don't let's waste this gorgeous day thinking!" she said. "My head isn't used to it, and it hurts. Come on, anybody that wants to--I'm going to walk down to the village to buy something, I don't care what. Who'll come?"

Winona, Helen and Nataly dropped into step beside Louise, and the four marched off singing "In the Land of the Sky-Blue Water," which they were trying to learn.

"That song really sounds better to Opeechee's ceremonial drum than anything else," remarked Louise.

"Real Indian music always sounds better if you pound something while you sing it, even if it's only a dish-pan," said Winona.

"Please don't mention dish-pans," begged Louise, 138 "they're a tender point. I just parted from mine half an hour ago."

"All right," said Winona good-humoredly, "I have something else interesting to tell you. I bought a rowboat to-day."

"Oh, good!" cried Helen. "Marie's canoe and mine will be up in a day or so, but a canoe wiggles so when you try to fish

from it. Now we can all go fishing. Elizabeth brought tackle, but we thought we couldn't do much good, fishing from the bank."

"And the Blue Birds can go out in it till they learn more about canoes, too," said Winona. "I'm going exploring myself in it as soon as I can. What are you really going to the village for, Louise--or don't you know?"

"Benzine for my burnt-wood outfit," said Louise. "I had some thinks, and that was one. Little Louise is going to make some nice burnt-leather things for the neighborhood. Pillows and table-covers, and heaps of things for the farmers' wives to buy. Lessons in the art if they want them. I brought my outfit, and some skins, and colors."

"I thought I'd model some vases and pots and bowls, and fire them," said Helen. "They might sell, too. Have you thought of anything, Winona?"

"Not a blessed thing, for myself," said Winona. "You know, I'm not particularly clever about doing things like that, except making baskets, and Florence does those better than I do. But I have thought of one thing--how to sell our wares after they are made." 139

"That's quite a useful thing to know," said Louise. "About the most useful thing there is, in fact. Well, how?"

"We'll have to peddle them," said Winona calmly. "The farmers' wives won't come out here to buy unless we advertise a lot, and we can't afford that. The thing for us to do is to get some sort of a thing to carry the goods in, and make it look awfully arts-an-craftsy, and pull it round and sell things at the houses."

"A soap-box on wheels is what I *think* you're hinting at," said Louise, "but I hope not."

"Are you really in earnest?" asked Nataly, who had taken no share in the talk so far.

"Why not?" asked Winona. "It's no worse than taking a horse and cart down through the Italian quarter and selling rummage things to the women there; and that's what the Ladies' Aid at our church did last winter."

"It's different," insisted Nataly, and nothing could shake her in her ideas. So Louise poked Winona, as a hint not to argue any more. But when Nataly went into the little general store to buy some picture post-cards Louise whispered to the other girls, "I have a glorious improvement on your soap-box plan, Winnie. If you girls will help me put it through I'll tell you all about it."

"I'd like to hear about it first," said Helen doubtfully; for Louise's plans were always original, but not always safe and sane. Before Louise could answer Nataly was back again, and Louise began to tell her the story of the reduced English gentlewoman who had to sell shrimps for a living, by calling them up and down the streets. "And she was such a perfect lady," finished Louise, "that whenever she called out 'Shrimps for sale!' she'd add under her breath, 'I hope to goodness nobody hears me!'"

"And did they?" Nataly asked innocently, while Winona tried to keep her face straight.

"No, they didn't," said Louise sadly, "so she never sold any shrimps at all. And so she died of starvation."

But Nataly, instead of grasping the moral, said only, "Well, why didn't she eat the shrimps, then?"

At which Louise grunted disgustedly and went in to buy herself the benzine.

After that day there was always a feeling in the village near Camp Sunrise that every Camp Fire Girl's first object in life was cat-rescue. And it was Winona who was responsible. To begin with, the day the girls arrived at camp she had been seen by all the interested villagers, walking near the head of the dusty procession, leading a small, sash-bandaged gray kitten by a string. Hike had meowed for air and exercise just as the village had been neared, and Winona had taken that means of giving it to him, without risking his running off. The villagers might have let that, by itself, pass. But when it was coupled with Winona's performance of this afternoon--well, you can judge for yourself.

It was after the girls had bought everything they came for, and were on their way to camp. Out of a 141 gate, across their road, bounded two small boys, each of whom held a wriggling black kitten.

"Won't you hurt the kitty if you hold it by just one leg?" inquired Winona of the nearest boy.

"It don't matter if we do hurt 'em--they ain't any good anyhow," he explained. "We're going to drown 'em in a minute."

"Oh, *no!*" protested Winona.

"Well, will you take 'em?" asked the other boy. "Mother says she can't keep any more cats."

Winona took the victims on the spot, and put them into the continuous pocket all around the bottom of her Balkan blouse. The small boys went back into their yard, where they were heard announcing, "Mother! A girl took the kitties!" And Winona stood still with a kitten at each hip.

"You'd better give them back," said Nataly, who was afraid of cats.

"Oh, I couldn't!" said Winona. "It's so nice to be alive, even if you're a cat--and there isn't really any Cat-Heaven, you know."

"Well, advertise them for sale, then," said Louise impatiently. "Good home and kind treatment wanted for two black kittens--salary no object."

She wasn't in earnest, but Winona was.

"I will!" she said. "Not for sale, but to give away. Will one of you take this notice to the paper, while I take the kittens to camp for the night?"

"I'll take the kittens home!" volunteered Helen, Louise and Nataly with a touching oneness of feeling. 142

Winona grinned. "Why, you very obliging people!" she said. "Please put them in a box with netting, then, so they can't get away. I'll go and advertise. I'm perfectly sure such good kittens as these will have lots of applications!"

Louise and Helen, each with a kitten, accompanied by Nataly, kittenless, went slowly campward in eloquent silence, while Winona sped back to the office of the village paper. So the next day an advertisement appeared in the *Press*:

Wanted, to find homes for two black kittens, nice purrers, good mousers. Can be separated. Apply Box 2, *Press* office, or at Camp Karonya, in person.

"I don't care if they do laugh," said Winona when she got back, to find Camp Karonya howling at her in rows. "If they laugh they're more apt to remember, and come get the kittens. I'll put them out of the way, poor little things, if nobody answers in a day or two."

But--whether it was that cats who were "nice purrers" were a novelty, whether it is true that there's a place for everything in this world if we could only get in touch with it--the very next day there were five applicants for those two black kittens. Indeed, Winona had great difficulty in holding onto Hike the Camp Cat, who had grown by now into a very presentable, if fat, Maltese kitten. People seemed to think that it was Winona's duty to distribute cats as long as cats held out.

The only drawback was that for the rest of the time it was there the village with one accord used Camp Karonya as a clearing-house for its cats!

## 143 CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A couple of days later Winona took Florence and Puppums, and went exploring in the rowboat. Louise and Helen were very busy making a tree-house, but they promised to see that Hike the Camp Cat was looked after and no belated advertisement answerer got him.

The Merriams rowed about a mile along the river, in the direction away from the village, without finding anything more interesting than a muskrat, who disappeared when Puppums barked at him. But just a while after this thrilling incident they rounded a bend, and there in a red canoe, placidly catching fish, sat Tom!

His back and that of the boy with him were turned to them, but there was no mistaking him, nor Billy Lee. Neither of them saw the rowboat till it was quite close, and Florence and Puppums howled together in greeting.

"Hello, kid! H'lo, Winnie--you've frightened the fish!" was his brotherly greeting: while Billy, not being a relation, took off his hat and said politely that he was glad to see them, and how was the camp?

"Oh, never mind the fish!" said Winona, when she had answered Billy with equal politeness. "You can fish any day, but you haven't seen your family since last week. How do you come to be up here so soon?"

"Captain Gedney worked it somehow--I don't know how," said Tom. "Anyhow, we're here. Good fishing, too. See?" He held up a string of fair-sized fish in proof. 144

"Where's your camp?" asked Florence, while Puppums almost had hysterics and had to be handed into the canoe so that he could love Tom properly. "Can I come see it?"

"Sure you can," said Tom. "No charge for the view. It's those tents right over there."

"You know I don't mean that," said Florence, pouting. "I mean I want to get out and go over."

"Oh, wait a day or so, can't you, Floss?" implored Tom, who plainly didn't want to be detached from his fishing. "Wait and come over with the rest of the bunch, and we'll give you a grand welcome, fifes and drums and things. I tell you, though, girls, why can't you all come use our swimming pool? We've just finished damming off a little branch stream into a dandy pond--paved it and all. Started it last year. But you'd have to give us warning, so we wouldn't be in it."

"Why, how lovely!" exclaimed Winona. "I know Mrs. Bryan will let us, and all of us brought our bathing-suits."

"Good enough!" said Tom.

"How was mother--was everything all right at home when you left?" asked his sister.

"Oh, fine and dandy. But what do you think, Winnie, that Children's Aid child has come. Mother says she's glad it happened while we were out of the way, so she'd have a better opportunity to get him running smoothly without our help."

"Him!" said Winona. "Do you mean they sent a boy, not a girl?" 145

Tom laughed. "They certainly did--a darky about twelve, as black as your hat, and a regular Topsy."

"Good gracious!" said Winona, laughing.

Mrs. Merriam had written to the Children's Aid Society a little while before for a girl of about fourteen--black preferred--who could help with the dishes out of school hours. She had heard nothing about it, and the family had completely forgotten it till now.

"When did he get there?" asked Winona.

"The day before I came away," said Tom. "It was wash-day, and that colored washerwoman mother has opened the door. First we knew she came back and said: 'There's a white woman and a young colored gemman to see Mrs. Merriam.' So mother went out, and came back in a minute with the agent, an awfully nice sort of a girl, and the smallest, solemnest, black boy you ever saw. Mother didn't want him at first, but the agent-girl swore he had all the virtues, and needed a good home and moral training. Then she walked off and left him sitting on a chair, staring straight ahead. I tell

you, it got sort of embarrassing after awhile. So I asked him his name."

"What is it?" asked Winona.

"He said, 'Ah was christen' Thomas!'" returned Tom, grinning. "So mother told him that I'd been christened Thomas, too, and asked him for his last name. And he said, 'Ma las' name's Clay--but hit ain' ma callin' name. Ma callin' name's Thomas. But yo'-all kin call me Mistah Clay if yo' want to!'"

"Did mother want to?" asked Winona. 146

"She nearly exploded," said Tom, "but I think they came to some sort of a compromise. I don't think he'll leave her time to miss us, for a week or so anyway!"

"Well, I'm glad of that," said Winona. "Tommy, did you ever know of anything I could do?"

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Tom, while Billy Lee, who had been silently fishing all this time, looked interested.

"I mean something I could do that would earn money," she explained. "We want to stay in camp longer than we have money for, so we must earn it."

"The thing you always were best at was darnin' my stockings," said Tom cheerfully, and grinned.

"Oh, dear, I just knew you'd say that!" said Winona. "I can't go round selling darns!"

Billy Lee lifted up his head from a tangle in his fishing-line as he answered, "I don't see why you couldn't. I mean--why couldn't you do mending for the Scouts? If you'd be willing to, I know we'd be glad. There's an awful lot of holes in my clothes."

"And nobody to do them?" asked Winona, delighted.

"Not a soul," answered both boys at once.

"Oh, how perfectly splendid!" said Winona. "Mr. Gedney will know how much I ought to charge for them, won't he?"

"Yes, or Mrs. Bryan had better tell you," said Tom.

"Oh, can I have them now?" asked Winona.

"Oh, bother!" said Tom. "Won't to-morrow do?" 147

"I'll get 'em," said Billy Lee, and made a flying leap out of the canoe to shore.

He was gone a few minutes, and came back with a clothes-basket full of garments of various kinds: also with the Scoutmaster, Captain Gedney.

"Good-morning, girls!" said the Scoutmaster. "This is fine! Billy tells me we're going to get our mending done!"

"Oh, is it really all right?" quivered Winona.

"Yes, indeed, it's more than all right," answered Mr. Gedney enthusiastically. "I was thinking of taking a trip to the village to see if we could find somebody we could put at it, but this is better. Now you get your Guardian to put a price on the work, either by the piece or by the hour. I can promise you spot-cash, and a great deal of gratitude into the bargain."

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So the end of it was that Florence and Winona rowed happily back down the river with what looked extremely like two weeks' wash in their boat; also with the joyful certainty that Winona, at least, was going to be able to earn her share of the expenses for the extra weeks of camping.

The boys promised to paddle down in a couple of days and get the mended clothes, and--most important--the bill for them. Billy Lee wanted to see his sister, anyway, he said.

When Florence and Winona got back nearly every girl in camp was seated out in the open air, in a big circle, and nearly all of them were talking at once, 148 planning the ceremonial meeting for that night. There was to be a ceremonial fire, a very high and beautiful one with a central pole--this last an innovation which Louise was introducing. And Winona and Marie Hunter were going to be made Fire Makers, Louise and several of the others were going to be Wood-gatherers, and Nataly Lee was going to join.

When Winona joined the circle she found that a good deal of the excitement was being caused by the Book of the Count. Marie and Helen, with paints and pen and brushes, were making the record of the days they had spent in camp a very lively affair.

Winona sat down and looked on at what Marie was doing, and read on the page they had open:

On the second day, Winona,  
Ray-of-Light, the Cat-Collector  
Made her way unto the village,  
To buy post-cards at the village.  
With her went the cheerful Comet,  
Ishkoodah with flaming tresses;  
With her went the Star of Evening,  
Helen, gentle Star of Evening,  
And Nokoma, flower-giver--  
Nataly the flower-giver.  
Seeking post-cards, thus they wandered,  
But alas, the Cat-Collector  
Much preferred to bring home kittens,  
And to advertise those kittens.  
All next day the ad-replyers  
Tracked our camp with questing footsteps,  
Asked of us--"Where are those kittens?  
Give us several dozen kittens!"  
For, alas, those cats had vanished,  
Gone with the first two replyers  
To the ad Winona paid for.

Still about our Camp come wailing  
Folk who seek the cats they heard of,  
Seeking several dozen kittens;  
Still the Ray-of-Light, Winona,  
Cannot give them any kittens,  
Cannot stop their wronged insistence  
On those kittens, on those kittens--

"Oh, good gracious!" asked Winona, beginning to laugh before she read any further. "Who *did* make all that up?"

"I did," said Marie proudly, "but we all helped."

"Do you mean to tell me that any more people have come catting to-day?" demanded Winona.

"Only seven," said Helen. "Winnie, you'll never hear the last of this."

"Well, Mrs. Bryan, I've found some work to do that will earn money," said Winona, hastily changing the subject.

"Florence and I went up to the Scouts' camp, and Mr. Gedney gave us the boys' mending to do. He said you were to put a price on it for us."

"Twenty to twenty-five cents an hour," supplied Mrs. Bryan promptly. "You'd better have some of the other girls help you, too, dear, for there's enough work there to take up a good deal of your time for three or four days, and you don't come camping to turn yourself into a sewing-girl, even for the good of the camp."

"Very well," said Winona. "Who hasn't picked out any special work to do yet?"

"Nataly Lee," said someone.



"Neither have I," said Elizabeth. "I'll help, too." 149

A half-dozen of them went off to a sunny spot, produced a large alarm-clock to time themselves by, and put in two hours of work immediately. That is, all but Nataly. She got tired at the end of one hour, and went off, she said, to lie down. The others got the mending almost done, for many hands make light work. Then they piled up the basket again, and went back to camp. It was Winona's turn to get supper that night.

"There ought to be about four dollars' worth of work in that basket," said Helen thoughtfully when they all met at supper.

"It's probably more than we'll have next time," said Winona. "But anyway, it's a steady income. Let's hope they'll be kind, and wear big, awful holes in everything they have."

"They will, unless they've had a change of heart since last week," said Louise.

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After supper was cleared away the girls set about collecting wood in the open space on the top of the little hill, for their ceremonial-fire. It was the most happy and successful meeting they had had, and also, as Louise expressed it, the most beadful. It ended in a ghost-dance around the fire. After it was through the girls lay still and told stories, which gradually became more ghostly than the dance. It was very pleasant till bedtime came. Then even the bravest of them made dashes for their tents; and Mrs. Bryan, making her rounds after the camp was asleep, found five lighted candles keeping ghosts out of five tents in a row!

## 150 CHAPTER FOURTEEN

There were bathing and boating and tree-climbing in the days that followed and there were hikes and folk-dances and various entertainments, by themselves, and occasionally with the Scouts for audience. The girls canoed all up and down the river, and borrowed the Scout swimming-pool with rapture, and learned all sorts of swimming and diving stunts. And everybody got brown and husky and cheerful. But in between the good times the girls worked on steadily, each at her appointed task, and in about ten days there was a promising collection of material to be sold, for the virtuous purpose of giving Camp Karonya some more weeks of life in the Wampoag woods.

Helen gave up modelling her beloved statuettes, and went soberly to work at bowls and vases, and other such things that people would be likely to find useful. She decorated them with motives she drew herself, and took them up to Wampoag, the summer-resort, where there was a kiln, and had them fired. Louise made burnt-leather pillows, which filled her hair with such a fearful smell that for awhile she washed it every day, till it occurred to her to wear a bathing-cap to work in. She also burned mats and table-covers and napkin-rings to the limit of her purchasing power; and when that failed she took to carving things out of wood she picked up. The Blue Birds wove raffia baskets and table-mats, and Marie and Edith crocheted bags and 151 collars. Adelaide devoted herself to canning. The rest helped her sometimes, but more of the time she took pride in putting up the fruit all by herself.

There were embroidered tea-cloths and runners, and there was hammered brass-work. The honor-counts rolled up like snowballs, for the girls made nearly everything a girl is capable of making or decorating. There was almost enough made to stop.

But still Camp Karonya held nightly discussions, having made these various things, as to how to sell them. The plan most of them wanted to adopt was that of going from house to house with them. Having a fair meant hiring a room or store, or running the risk of having nobody come to buy--for the camp was two miles from the nearest point of civilization. The only alternative seemed putting them into some of the resort shops to be sold on commission, and there was a large risk there that the shops might not do properly by them. There was another alternative, sending them home to be sold, but that seemed inglorious, somehow.

One night, after everything had been argued over until everybody had finished from sheer inability to think of anything more to say, and begun to discuss constellations instead, Winona, lying on her back, felt a pull at her sleeve. She rolled over, to see Louise stealthily working herself down the hill, out of the moonlight. Winona rolled as stealthily after her.

"What is it?" she asked, when they were at the bottom of the hill, where they couldn't be seen.

"Come hither, Little One, and I will tell you!" 152 responded Louise, like Kipling's Crocodile. She led the way to the dock, where they sat down in the moored rowboat, and Louise began to hold forth.

"We've got more than enough things to sell, and none of those plans are a bit of good. What we want to do is to take all that stuff up to Wampoag, in this old boat of yours, and peddle them at the big hotels."

"I think so, too," agreed Winona, "but the girls haven't gotten unanimous yet. You know Nataly Lee's going to fight to the last ditch against selling things that way. I don't know whether she thinks it's too hard work or too undignified, but you can see she isn't going to stand for it one little bit."

"Oh, that girl makes me tired!" said Louise. "I'm not going to wait for their old unanimity. I tell you, Win, I have a plan!"

"Well, go ahead!" Winona encouraged.

"To-morrow morning," said Louise. "You and I will slide off early, like the Third Little Pig, and pack the boat with all the junk we have ready. It's all in the boxes in the store-place. Then we'll row to Wampoag, and just sell things all day!"

"How'll we get them away without anybody seeing us?" objected Winona, who liked the plan very much. "It would be gorgeous if we could manage it."

"We'll have to go now and sneak the stuff into the boat before bedtime," said Louise. "We can pile them on that amateur stretcher we used to carry Florence. I think nobody ever took it apart." 153

"Hurrah! Come on, then!" said Winona, and the two girls slid off into the shadows.

It was not such very hard work. They filled their two suitcases, and put what wouldn't go in the suitcases on the

stretcher; and had everything in the boat and covered up with a waterproof blanket before their absence had been noticed. Then they stole back into the circle as innocently as kittens, in time to sing "Mammy Moon" at the tops of their voices with the rest.

They were both on the policing shift that week, so it was easy for them to arrange to get their share of camp-work over early. By half-past eight in the morning they were rowing gayly down the river in the direction of Wampog. Florence wanted to come, but they had to repress her. She might have been in their way.

When they were around the bend, safely out of sight of the camp, Winnie stopped rowing.

"I had an idea, too!" she said. "Reach under the seat, Louise."

Louise pulled out, first, the luncheon she herself had poked under a little while before; next, a good-sized bundle that appeared to be clothes.

"What's this for?" she asked.

"For us," said Winona.

Louise opened it, and eyed its contents puzzledly. There were a dressing-sack made of bandanna handkerchiefs, partly ripped up, two old skirts, an old shawl and a checked gingham apron.

"They're to dress up in," explained Winona. "We'll be poor little emigrant girls that want to sella 154 da nice-a goods, lady! The women who go around selling things out of suitcases always have a foreign look. So I fished these out of the box of stuff we had for theatricals. I knew just where it was, because we got some things out of it for 'Everygirl' last week."

"Oh, gorgeous!" cried Louise, finishing the ripping-up of the dressing-sack into its original red handkerchiefs. She dug through the pile again and picked out the shortest skirt, for she hadn't her full growth yet. "Who gets the little checked shawl?" she asked.

"You do, if you want it," answered Winona. "I'll take the apron."

They both turned in the collars of their middy blouses, and rolled the cuffs under. Skirts over them, a bandanna apiece round their necks, and the checked shawl over Louise's head and a handkerchief on Winona's--and they were very convincing emigrants.

"Our shoes are rather too good," said Winona discontentedly, "but you mustn't ask too much in this world. Pin your hair up, Louise. It's too red for an Italian, or even a Syrian."

She managed to secure her own on top under her 'kerchief as she spoke. They were both so brown that they looked like natives of somewhere else, and the dresses were very natural. The long skirts and fastened-up hair made them both look eighteen or twenty--for Winona was as tall as she would ever be, five feet six, and Louise, though shorter, was plump.

"We can buy long earrings at the ten-cent store on our way up," said Louise. "I always did want to." 155

"All right," said Winona.

"And, for goodness sake, Win, see if you can't get up some sort of an accent. Italian would be the easiest, I guess."

"Yes, kinda lady! Sella da fina things--real handa-made!" responded Winona, her white teeth flashing.

Then they came to the Boy Scouts' camp, and they had to row very softly, and keep as far away from the bank as they could. But luck was still with them, and none of the Scouts happened to be fishing that morning.

"If we'd remembered we might have brought back the mending," said Louise, with a half-concealed desire to go tell the Scouts about her prospective lark.

"Better not go in there!" said Winona. She had a brother in the camp, and she didn't care to risk being stopped in mid-career of what promised to be a very fine time. So they rowed down the river till they reached Wampog, and tied their boat to the dock.

They took out the stretcher, put a suitcase on either end of it and piled the things that were too big for the suitcases in the middle. Then they each took an end and started bravely forth.

"Where da gooda hotel for sella da goods?" asked Louise, with a broad and friendly grin, of the interested dock-keeper.

"Any at all," he answered. "Just go straight down this road till you see a hotel. They're all together."

"Thank you, mister," Louise answered, and they trotted on.

The sight of two young Italian girls carrying a 156 stretcher full of goods proved to be a little more of a sensation than the girls had bargained for. They felt as if they had never been so much stared at in their lives, and they were both grateful when they reached the shelter of the first hotel porch.

It was a big hotel that they had come upon, and its wide porches were full of women, young and old, rocking, and talking and embroidering, and willing enough to look at the things the girls had. The arrangement was that Winona should take care of the smaller things, the painted and embroidered linens and so forth in the suitcases, while Louise attended to the pottery and larger art-craft things, and a row of Adelaide's jellies. She didn't expect to sell the jelly to people who already had three meals a day, but she was agreeably surprised. Evidently they liked to have things to eat in their rooms.

The stretcher and suitcases were set on the porch and Louise, with an ingratiating grin under her shawl, went from woman to woman, holding up her wares.

"Look at da fine pot--native wares--very cheapa?" she asked. "You not have to buy. We lika show. Buy da fine pot cheapa? You nice lady--you take real Indian pillow--real pine pillow!"

"I believe I will," said an energetic-looking old lady with white hair and a black silk dress. "How much is that pillow, my dear? And aren't you pretty young to be out selling things this way? You don't look more than seventeen."

Louise swelled with pride at being taken for as old as that, but she managed to answer, "One dollar for 157 pillow--very cheap--real hand work!" and to the last question, "I lika sella da goods--four little poor ones younger as me home. I *very* old!"

At which the elderly lady bought the pillow on the spot. Louise put the dollar in the pocket of her skirt, and went back to the stretcher after a big vase of Helen's, which was the pride of her heart, and for which she meant to ask at least one-fifty.

"Real pottery pot, lady!" she explained to the nearest woman to her. "Real hand-made--see? Real hand-painted--only two dollar!"

Louise had spent a summer at a hotel herself, the year before, and she knew all the tricks and manners of the porch-peddlers. She let the woman who wanted the vase beat her down to one-sixty, and pocketed the extra dime that she hadn't thought she'd get with a sense of duty well done. She frisked up and down the porch having a glorious time, while Winona, with her open suitcase, sat still by the top step. She did not need to move, for the women were as interested in her wares as they always are in table-linens. She sold a stencilled crash luncheon set of Marie's, five pieces, for five dollars, while Louise was haggling over the price for Helen's vase. Several of the bead bags and necklaces woven on the little looms went, too. The girls left that porch with nearly twelve dollars worth of goods sold.

The next hotel did not do so well by them, for the people there only bought a few handkerchiefs and bead chains. Still it was better than nothing. They had covered six hotels by one o'clock and made twenty-five 158 dollars. The needle-work, much to the girls' surprise, went more quickly than anything else.

"It must be the wistful sweetness of your expression, or else they think I look too well-fed to be sorry for, Win," said Louise as they munched their sandwiches on the dock. The dock-keeper had given them permission. "You just sit still and look pleasant, and the sales get made. I have to chase all over creation, and tease and joke and cheapen, to get them to buy mine."

"I'm afraid to talk much, for fear my accent will break through," explained Winona. "It's the goods, I think. They all seem crazy over those stencilled things. I could sell a lot more if I had them."

"Haven't you any more?" asked Louise between bites.

"Only one, and I promised that to your kinda lady that you sold the pine pillow to, and told you were the oldest of five. But I'm taking orders," finished Winona with a grin.

"Do you suppose Marie will stand for going on with it?"

"For what--this bandanna party? She needn't--I'll deliver them myself," stated Winona calmly.

"What about the carved frames Elizabeth made?" asked Louise, as they rose and took up the burden of life in the shape of their much lightened stretcher.

"Pretty well, but nothing like the way Florence's and Frances's little sweet-grass baskets went."

"If we sell enough to run the camp another two 159 weeks, I don't see why the girls shouldn't keep any money over that they earn," said Winona thoughtfully. "The proprietor of that little boarding-house we went to last but one says she wants more jelly. *That's* all gone, thank goodness--oo, but it was heavy!"

"The little baskets at a quarter apiece are going off fast, too," said Louise. "Hotel Abercrombie-by-the-Water. Don't forget your dialect, angel-child."

"E pluribus unum! Panama manana! Nux vomica!" answered Winona enthusiastically as they ascended the steps. "Buya da beada necklace, lady?"

"Good!" said Louise under her breath, and herself tackled dialect again. "Buya da pot for poor woman, lady? Got thirteen children to keep--no money!"

"Thirteen children--really?" asked the woman in horror.

"Thirteen--all girls!" answered Louise mournfully, while Winona bent very low over her suitcase, and tried not to laugh. "Unlucky number, huh?"

"Vèry, for her!" said the woman. "Well, I really must buy something to help her."

Winona was going to stop her, for she thought it wasn't fair; although Louise evidently took it as a lovely joke. But as the woman did not feel that her duty to the thirteen went beyond buying one fifteen-cent sweet-grass napkin-ring--and she only wanted to give ten cents for it--Winona did not intervene. She only whispered, "Don't, Louise!" next time she passed her. And Louise, though she laughed, said no more about the thirteen poor little Camp Fire Girls starving 160 at home. Then towards evening it was Winona who got into trouble.

They had sold about forty-five dollars' worth of stuff in the course of the day, and were back at the first hotel, the one they had started from, to deliver the stencilled set Winona had promised to Louise's white-haired lady. Winona, who felt very tired after her long day of tramping and selling, was sitting on the top of the hotel porch in the shade of a pillar, her hands crossed on her lap. Her pretty face was pale with the long, tiring day, and her eyelids drooped. She was figuring out that, what with the Scouts' mending and this day's work, and the orders they had taken, the camp could go on three weeks more. And she felt a touch on her shoulder.

"My dear," said the brisk voice of the lady who had bought the stencilled set, "you seem tired."

"Why, not so very," said Winona, coming out of her thinking--fit hastily, and forgetting her accent on the way.

"And don't you find this a hard life for so young a girl?" went on the lady. "Wouldn't you rather do something else?"

Winona smiled and shook her head. "I like it," she said.

The old lady sat down by her and took her hand. Louise, meanwhile, out of hearing, was trying to sell a very lopsided basket to an elderly gentleman.

"My child," she said, "I can't help feeling that you're too intelligent and too refined-looking for a life 161 like this. I am sure you are not an Italian. Is there nothing I could do to help you?"

Winona felt very uncomfortable. She hadn't bargained for having people take a personal interest in her.

"Really there isn't anything," she answered truthfully. "I have a very good time. I can't tell you all about it, but indeed, I have a very pleasant life."

But the old lady was not to be daunted.

"My dear child, there is something very attractive about you," she said. "I believe with the proper education you would become an unusually charming young girl. You are young enough still to be trained. Is that girl with you your sister?"

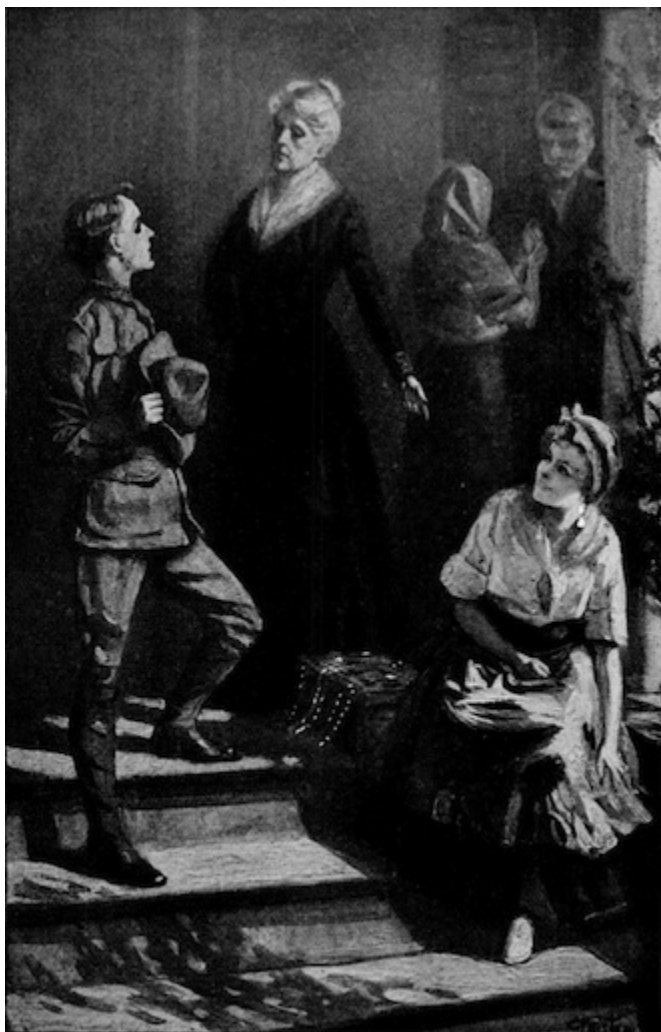
"Oh, no," said Winona, wondering what next.

"I thought as much," said the old lady. "You don't look like sisters. You're naturally of a better class than she is. Now, supposing that someone who could do a good deal for you took you and had you educated, do you think you would be a good girl and do them credit?"

Winona did not know in the least what to say. It looked as if the old lady intended to adopt her before she could escape.

"It would be awfully nice," she said, uncomfortably, "and very kind. But--indeed, I couldn't!"

The old lady had begun to speak again, when a clatter of hasty feet on the steps behind them made her and Winona both turn around and look.



"WILLIAM!" SAID HIS AUNT, "DO YOU KNOW THIS--THIS YOUNG PERSON?"

## 162 CHAPTER FIFTEEN

It was only a tall boy in the uniform of the Boy Scouts who was tearing up the steps. But both the old lady and Winona uttered a faint squeal, the old lady because he kissed her, and Winona because she recognized the newcomer. It was Billy Lee, and he was evidently a relative of Winona's would-be benefactress.

"How are you, auntie, and how's everything?" he was inquiring genially, with an arm still about her. Winona gazed wildly around, meanwhile, for a hole to crawl into, but there was none. "You see, I've come to dinner," went on Billy cheerfully.

By this time he had swung around, and seen Winona. He took in her whole get-up, earrings, kerchief, sagging skirt, checked apron; and, further off, Louise making change energetically in the same regalia. He began to laugh.

"Good for you, Winona!" he said. "Been selling Camp Fire stuff?"

"William!" said his aunt before Winona could answer, "Do you know this--this young person?"

Billy looked embarrassed.

"Oh, say, Winnie, I'm afraid I've put my foot in it," said he. But he went on telling the truth--Billy was unfortunately incapable of doing anything else. At least, it seemed unfortunate to Winona right then. "Why, yes, Aunt Lydia. This is Winona Merriam, who lives next door to us. She's camping about a mile and a half down the river from us Scouts." 163

The old lady turned sharply on Winona.

"Then what makes you masquerade as an Italian peddler?" she asked sharply.

Winona took courage, for though the old lady was cross, she did not seem unforgivingly angry.

"We thought if we dressed up perhaps people would buy things quicker," she explained. "But we do really need the money very badly, don't we, Billy?"

"They're trying to make enough to stay in the woods all August, auntie," explained Billy. "They've all been working like beavers, making things, to do it."

"I don't see yet why the bandanna handkerchiefs," said the old lady tartly. "And you, miss"--to Louise, who had come up--"what did you mean by telling me that you were the eldest of five, and hadn't slept under a roof for ten days?"

"Because it's true," said Louise. "I haven't--we're camping. And I *am* the eldest of five, worse luck! I have to spend my whole time at home setting an example. That's why I go away to be naughty!"

It was impossible to be angry long with Louise Lane, and the old lady did not seem to want to be angry with Winona. So things straightened themselves out, and actually ended in an invitation to stay to dinner!

"But we've nothing but our middy blouses, under these awful things," protested Winona, "and Mrs. Bryan will be worried if we don't get home till late."

"That's all right," said Billy's aunt Lydia, whose name was Lawrence. She was Mrs. Lee's sister. "I'll have them send a man down from the dock to tell your Guardian where you are."

"Oh, then thank you!" said Winona radiantly. But Louise still hesitated.

"Well, what is it?" asked the old lady.

Louise hung her shawl-draped head for a moment, then she flung it back and answered frankly.

"I may want to come peddling again, and if they see us in our camp uniform they'll know who we are!"

"Great Scott!" cried Billy, beginning to laugh, "You *are* a queer girl! I say, Aunt Lydia, let her disguise herself some more, if that's what she wants. Give her some of your clothes, or the chambermaid's, or somebody's. Would that be all right, Louise?"

"Why, yes indeed!" said Louise, grinning joyously. "Lead on, Desperate Desmond."

"I never saw such girls!" said Miss Lawrence. "However, you may as well have your play out. William, get a bellboy to put these goods somewhere. I'll take these objects of charity to get ready for dinner. Your room's next suite twelve, the one I have."

She shepherded the two girls upstairs by the staircase, instead of the elevator, as if she wanted them to be conspicuous.

"Now, remember," explained she, "you're two young foreign peddlers that I'm giving a dinner to out of the kindness of my heart. I'm loaning you clothes out of the same thing. So you can go right on peddling if you want to, you with the business instinct--Louise you said your name was? Very well, Louise, you can go on selling your potteries and bead bags after dinner--if you want to. But I want to talk to Winona myself. I don't know but I still want to adopt her!"

Miss Lawrence left the girls alone when she had shown them to a room, and went to prepare for dinner herself. There was a bathroom next to them, and they made for it--one after another, of course--with gurgles of joy. Winona went first, while Louise was doing her hair, which was so thick and long it took a great deal of time to arrange.

"Isn't hot water heavenly when you haven't seen it in a tub for a week and a half?" said Winona, emerging in a borrowed kimono, which she presently passed on to Louise.

"I'll tell you when I've tried," said Louise, disappearing in her turn into the bathroom. She turned around and poked out her head to say, "Now, remember, we've both got to keep on looking as old as we can. We have characters to keep up!"

Winona began to investigate the clothes Miss Lawrence had laid out for them. She did not expect to find anything more exciting than a black silk with a fichu, or something else elderly of that sort. Instead, there lay on the bed two pretty frocks which had certainly been made for girls of their age.

She held them both up against her. They were a little shorter than she usually wore her skirts, both of them, and a little loose. Evidently their owner was of a build somewhere between Winona and Louise. But Louise, when she emerged, was quite pleased at 166 that, for what was short for Winona was long for her, naturally, and carried out the idea of age that she wished to convey. She chose the more elaborate of the two, a green silk, because the other dress was pink, which doesn't match red hair. But it did match Winona's brown hair and blue eyes beautifully, and the wide satin sash was very becoming to her. The girls gave their tennis shoes a liberal dose of whitening, and decided that they would have to do. There were stockings to go with the dresses.

When they were done dressing they gazed at each other in admiration.

"I never had as pretty a dress in my life!" said Winona delightedly, surveying the folds of rose-colored organdy that ruffled about her. She reached up as she spoke to fasten back her curls with the shell barrette that usually held them at the back of her neck.

"Glad you like them!" said Miss Lawrence, appearing on the threshold of the next room. "They belong to my niece Nataly--I suppose you know Nataly if you live next door to her--but she hasn't had them yet. I brought them to her from my trip abroad. Here, Winona, you haven't any hair-ribbon."

"I haven't been wearing any in camp," said Winona, standing still, however, while Miss Lawrence unclasped the barrette and supplied its place with a rose-colored satin ribbon tied about her head, fillet-fashion.

"That's the English fashion," said Miss Lawrence, "wear your hair loose till you're sixteen or seventeen, 167 then do it all up at once, instead of pulling it up by degrees, as we do here. It's very becoming, my dear."

Winona privately felt that it was a little youthful, but she said nothing, and indeed the effect of the shower of curls falling loose from under the ribbon was exceedingly becoming.

Louise, over by the mirror, continued to put pins into her hair, and Miss Lawrence did not try to super-intend *her* toilet at all, though Louise was getting herself up to look as near twenty as she could.

A knock at the door of the sitting-room, where they went when they were dressed, made them all turn.

"Come in," said Miss Lawrence.



"It's me, Billy," said his voice ungrammatically inside. "I say! What stunning clothes!" he added frankly as he took in the splendor of the girls' attire.

Winona looked at him rather shyly. The small bag he had carried must have been well packed, for Billy had blossomed out in a tuxedo and long trousers.

"Why," she said, "I didn't know you for a minute--you look so grown up!"

"I've had long trousers for a year now," explained Billy, "only I've always had on my uniform when you've seen me before."

"Of course, that's it," admitted Winona. But she continued to stare, for this tall young gentleman looked about eighteen in his correctly cut clothes, and she felt like such a little girl, looking as Miss Lawrence had made her look. What she did not know was that she was looking her very prettiest, like a girl in a play 168 or a picture, with her flushed cheeks and falling curls and rosy draperies. Miss Lawrence, who seemed to have taken a fancy to her, slipped her arm through Winona's, leaving Louise to follow with Billy.

Louise was not impressed in the least by Billy's grandeur. It took a good deal to impress Louise Lane, and one suit of evening clothes and a large hotel weren't likely to do it.

Winona did not look to the right or left as they entered the big dining-room, but she knew Louise had seen something, for she heard a little squeal of delight close behind her. They were scarcely seated when Louise burst out:

"What do you suppose they've done, Winnie? I don't know whether it was you or Billy, Miss Lawrence, but thank you both, anyway. Winona, our things are all set out in that little sun-parlor sort of place where everybody can see them, and there's a bellboy looking after them. I saw him selling a bead belt!"

"It wasn't any trouble," said Billy, looking embarrassed. "The management lets people use that room for displays, don't they, Aunt Lydia?"

He did not explain that he had tipped the head bellboy liberally to have the things looked after, and it never occurred to either of the girls till long after.

Winona secretly decided that Nataly couldn't be as trying as the girls thought her, if this was the kind of a brother she had. So she smiled brilliantly at Miss Lawrence and Billy, and felt very happy indeed over 169 the bright lights and the elaborate dinner and the orchestra and pink dress.

And then something occurred to her. This was Nataly's dress, a brand-new present-dress, and so was the one Louise had on. And they were getting all the first wear out of them, would Nataly like it?

She looked up, directly, and said what she thought.

"Miss Lawrence, will Nataly mind our wearing her clothes?"

Louise answered before Miss Lawrence had a chance. "You know perfectly well she will, Win. Why, she nearly had a fit when I climbed into a clean middy of hers day before yesterday. And these are uncommonly glad and happy rags we have on."

"If she doesn't like it," explained Miss Lawrence with perfect clearness, "she knows just what she can do. My niece Nataly is a spoiled young person if ever there was one. But don't worry, my dear"--for Winona was looking distressed at the idea of Nataly's objection--"I'll see that she's perfectly satisfied."

So Winona did not worry. She talked instead, and told Miss Lawrence everything she wanted to know about Camp Karonya and what they did there.

"It's a miniature community," said Miss Lawrence approvingly. "I wish they'd had them when I was a girl. I suppose you'll have a float at the lake carnival, since you're such enterprising young persons!"

"Oh, is there going to be a lake carnival?" asked both girls in a breath. Miss Lawrence nodded.

"Why, didn't you know?" asked Billy. "The 170 people here in Wampoag have them every year. They give prizes for the best decorated float and canoe. I don't know whether it's a cash prize this year or a cup."

"I do hope it's a cash prize!" breathed Louise fervently, while Winona's mind began to work at the ways and means for making and decorating a Camp Fire float, and the best way to get it up the lake.

"It would be lovely if we could do it," she said. "When is it to be?"

Billy pulled a little calendar out of the one small and concealed pocket that his clothes allowed him, and studied it.

"A week from to-morrow," he said. "You have lots of time."

"Then I'm sure we can do it," said Winona. "Marie has a canoe she'll probably want to enter, and besides that surely we can get up a float among us."

And then something which Louise--so she said afterwards--had been expecting, happened. One of the women who had bought pottery from them that morning came up, and began to talk to Miss Lawrence, quite as if the girls were out of hearing.

"Good-morning," she began, taking everything in as she talked. "Aren't these the little Italian vendors that were around this morning? Why, how transformed they look! Really, the younger one looks quite refined. And what are you doing with them, dear Miss Lawrence?"

Her tone added quite plainly, "And won't they pocket the spoons?" 171

Louise, the irrepressible, grinned above her salad. "Kinda lady loana da cloes," she said glibly; and the waiter, who had heard her discoursing in rapid and fluent English of an unmistakably home-grown kind the moment before, got behind a palm. If he hadn't he would have disgraced himself in a way no well-trained waiter should. Billy, too, dived into his napkin and seemed to have swallowed something down his Sunday throat. But Miss Lawrence remained quite calm.

"I have taken quite a fancy to them," she said. "They seem like good, industrious girls. I am glad to see you are so interested, too, Mrs. Gardner. The best way to help them--you were going to ask me that, were you not--is to buy their goods. You'll find them on sale in the little rose-room."

"Oh--ah, yes indeed!" said Mrs. Gardner, and fled, while the young people regarded Miss Lawrence with admiration.

When the meal was over Miss Lawrence would not hear of their going back to the camp, or going on with their selling. The bellboy or a maid could go on looking after their things, she said, and sent Billy over to see about it. Then they went into one of the little dancing-rooms and showed each other steps for a long time; that is, Billy and Winona did, for Louise said she was tired, and sat thankfully still, listening to the orchestra that played in the dining-room. After that Miss Lawrence carried them all off to a band concert.

It was ten-thirty by the time they had finished, and all had something more to eat--real, grown-up things 172 to eat in a most gorgeous cafe. Miss Lawrence wanted them to stay all night, and Winona was willing, but Louise insisted on going back.

"If we're here to-morrow morning," she explained, "every blessed woman that we sold things to will want to know all about us and our past lives, and then the secret will come out. No, thank you, Miss Lawrence,

"I see by the moonlight,  
'Tis past midnight,  
Time pig and I were home  
An hour and a half ago!"

"I being the pig, I suppose!" added Winona.

"Well, I won't keep you against your will," said Miss Lawrence, getting up from the cafe table. "So you'd better go back to the hotel. They can be packing up what's left of your things for you, while you change. But what about rowing across the lake and down the river in the dark? Can you look after them, William?"

"I should think I could!" said Billy. "Besides--I forgot to tell you, girls, or we might have had a grand reunion--Lonny Hughes and Tom are to meet me at the dock at about eleven, with one of the camp canoes. Tom's Winona's brother," he explained to his aunt. "So we'll take one of the girls in the canoe, and one of us will go in the boat, and get them home safe as anything. For the matter of that, you can't get hurt on this lake unless the fish should jump up and bite you," he added as they reached the hotel, and parted to dress.

The girls hurried off their finery, and got hastily into their serge skirts and white blouses. 173

"I feel like Cinderella!" said Winona as they went down in the elevator again, only to find that, quick as they had been Billy had been quicker, and stood, familiar-looking in his khaki, to take them away. The pottery and linen that was left would all go into one suitcase now, so well had they and the bellboy prospered. Billy gave them, too, the money that had been taken in during the evening. They hurried off, after they had said good-bye to Miss Lawrence, and made her promise to come see them at Camp Karonya and stay a whole day.

At the last moment she pushed a bundle into Winona's hands.

"Here are your dresses, child," she said. "You looked so sweet it would be a shame for you and Louise not to keep them. I'll make it up to Nataly."

Winona threw her arms around Miss Lawrence's neck, and kissed her.

"Thank you, dear fairy godmother!" she said.

A more astonished pair of boys than Lonny and Tom it would have been hard to find. It did not take long to explain matters. In a few moments they had Winona in the canoe between Tom and Billy, while Lonny rowed Louise in the boat. The girls held the boat and the canoe together. As they went Louise and Winona told the tale of their day's work.

When they were done Louise pulled out the money they had made, and began to count it.

"You have some, too, Win," she said.

"I know," said Winona, "I have what Billy gave me, that the bellboy made. But I don't believe it's a lot." 174

"Better count it," counselled Tom, and Winona did. When she was through she looked up with an awed expression.

"Nearly ten dollars more!" she announced. "Oh, Louise, there must be some mistake! Why, if we both really have made all that, there's enough for another three weeks' camping!"

"And orders ahead!" said Louise serenely. "It will take Marie and Adelaide more of their time than they'll want to spare from fancy diving and telling the birds from the wild-flowers, to make jelly and runners. I tell you, folks, I'm going to be an Italian porch-worker from now on. It pays. Sella da fina crock--getta da bigga price--blowa it in!"

The boys shouted. "Good for you, Louise!" they cried, and a startled bullfrog gave a deep emotional croak at the noise, and jumped into the water.

It was moonlight, so the trip home was pleasanter than any they had had. They sang till they came close to Camp Karonya, where they quieted down for fear of disturbing the sleeping girls. But they need not have worried. Camp Karonya was improving the moonlight night by sitting around a watch-fire, singing and telling stories. They could hear Helen's voice lifted up in "Old Uncle Ned," with a mandolin accompanying her that probably belonged to Edith. The boys tied the boat and the canoe, and carried the suitcases and stretcher, so pleasingly empty, ashore. All five walked over to where the fire gleamed, and were in the midst of the girls before anyone had seen them come.

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The girls jumped up and surrounded them.

"Where on earth have you been? What on earth have you been doing? Where in the name of common sense did you get that haughty black person who brought us news of you about six?" everybody wanted to know, while Adelaide and Nataly held brief reunions with their brothers, and six girls at once pressed refreshments on Lonny and Tom and Billy.

"We've sold most of your arts-and-crafts things," announced Winona.

"And every stitch of embroidery," added Louise.

"And we've been to a band concert and met a fairy godmother!" chanted Winona in her turn.

"And we have heaps and *heaps* of money!" finished Louise jubilantly.

Then all the girls cried out, "Oh, tell us about it! Tell us about it!"

So Louise sat down at a discreet distance from the camp-fire, and assisted by Winona's quieter voice, told the story. When she got to the part where they pretended to be Italian girls Nataly interrupted.

"Oh, that was dreadful!" she said. "Surely you didn't do that?"

"Didn't we, though?" grinned Louise cheerfully; "And your very own Aunt Lydia aided and abetted us, and gave us dinner and kind words besides!"

"Aunt Lydia!" exclaimed Nataly. 176

"She's over at one of the Wampoag hotels, Nataly," explained her brother. "You knew she was going to be there, didn't you?"

"How could I when I haven't heard from her?" asked Nataly.

"Oh, that's so!" said Billy penitently. "I ought to have brought you down her last letter, but it was addressed to me, and I forgot to pass it on."

The fact was, as Winona learned later, Miss Lawrence had very strong likes and dislikes, and much preferred her nephew to her niece.

Louise turned round to Nataly.

"You made some things to sell, didn't you?" she asked, "And yet you think it was shocking of us to sell them! I don't think that's fair."

"Well, I don't care. I don't think it's nice or lady-like to peddle things from door to door," said Nataly stubbornly.

"Maybe it wasn't," said Louise cheerfully, "but it was certainly heaps of fun!"

"Oh, we *did* have fun!" said Winona. "And we have orders for more of Marie's stencilled runners, and Adelaide's jelly."

"Did nobody love my pots?" asked Helen sadly.

"Oh, yes, indeed," consoled Winona, "only you were so industrious, and made so many, that we have some left. The Blue Birds' baskets went off very well, too."

"How much did you make?" asked Mrs. Bryan. "I'm wild to know." 177

Louise pulled her bandanna handkerchief out of her deepest pocket, and Winona produced hers from the bottom of her blouse. They handed them over to the Guardian.

"Mine's only what the bellboy took in while we were at dinner and out in the evening," Winona explained. "Louise took

care of all the rest."

Mrs. Bryan counted it silently, while the girls waited breathlessly for the result.

"Fifty-three dollars and forty-six cents!" announced Mrs. Bryan at last. "You blessed angels, with what we'll get for the mending, that means over three weeks more of camp!"

"By the way," suggested Tom here, "can't you give us what's done of the mending, please, Mrs. Bryan? It's time we got back to camp."

She sent Florence and another Blue Bird to get it, and they ran off, swinging their lanterns.

"We'll send down the bill by some of your sisters, with the rest of the work, by day after to-morrow at the furthest," she promised, as the girls stood up to bid the three Scouts good-bye.

They watched the canoe paddle off into the darkness, then settled down to hear the rest of the adventure.

"But there's something else we haven't told you!" said Winona, when the whole story had been told and talked over for a long while. "There's going to be a lake carnival."

"Oh, what fun! Let's go!" said Adelaide, speaking more brightly than Winona had ever known her to. "We could hike as far as this side of the lake by land, couldn't we, Opeechee?"

"Certainly we could--if we had to," said Mrs. Bryan, who was watching Winona. "Wait till Winona finishes. She looks as if she had a plan."

"I was thinking," said Winona, "that it would be very nice if we could decorate a float. The boys said they were sure the Scouts would loan us enough rowboats to build the float over, if we needed it. And we could have tents----"

"Of course we could!" said everybody enthusiastically, and all began to plan at once.

Finally Mrs. Bryan rose, and suggested that it was twelve o'clock, and that all but the breakfast-getters had better sleep till eight next morning. So they put out the fire, and went to bed.

About two o'clock a slim figure in a red kimono stole down the avenue of tents with a lantern. About two-thirds of the way there met her another, plumper figure, in a blue kimono, also with a lantern.

"Winona!" said the blue kimono.

"Why, Louise!" said the red one.

Then they both began to giggle in a subdued way.

"What on earth are you prowling round for, at this time of night?" asked Winona.

"What are you?" returned Louise.

Winona beckoned her friend over to a seat on a fallen log.

"I--well, I've been worrying over our dressing up that way, and fooling people, to sell things," she confessed. "I suppose you'll think I'm a horrid little prig, but--Louise, I think we ought to go back and tell those hotelers that we were just plain Camp Fire Girls, not Italian or Dalmatian or anything like that."

"I thought a Dalmatian was a dog," suggested Louise.

"Maybe it is," said Winona sadly.

Louise sat closer to Winona.

"Winnie," she said, "that's just what I climbed out of bed about myself. I was coming to look for you when I met you. I've been worrying about it, too. It was a lark, but I think it's up to us to gambol over there, clothed and in our right minds--and own up."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Winona. "We'll tell Mrs. Bryan in the morning."

"All right," said Louise, and she began to giggle.

"And then, while they're thinking how noble it is of us to confess, we'll sell 'em more things--real Camp Fire Girls' hand-crafts!"

"Louise," said Winona with admiring conviction, "you certainly *are* the limit."

They both laughed, and felt better. Then they went back to bed and went to sleep.

Next morning they rowed duly up the lake, and made a conscientious round of the hotels and cottages where they had sold their things the day before. But the way of the transgressor refused to be hard. They could wake very little excitement on the subject of their transformation in the minds of their patrons--who, it is to be feared, either regarded it all as a good joke, or 180 did not worry about it at all. Indeed, most of the people Louise could find to explain to were more wronged because she had no goods with her, than by anything else. So she took a number of orders.

"It's no use, Lou," said Winona, as they met at noon by the hotel where Miss Lawrence stayed, "I can't get a soul to care whether I'm a Canadian or a Hottentot. The only thing they'll say is, 'We'd like some more of the baskets,' or 'those runners,' or whatever they didn't get yesterday."

"Same here," said Louise. "But I landed some fine fat orders, and if you're as clever as I think you are, you did, too."

"Yes, I did," said Winona. "And, anyway," she added, brightening, "when we've done this hotel our consciences will be clear."

"I only hope we don't meet that horrid Mrs. Gardner," said Louise.

So they marched up the steps, and tried to pick out the women they had sold to the day before, to explain to them. But Winona had scarcely begun, "You see, we really weren't Italians at all," when the people she was talking to began to laugh. Winona, bewildered and a little cross, looked around to see what they were laughing at. She saw Miss Lawrence behind her, laughing, too.

"It's no use explaining, my dear," said that lady. "I did it myself. Everybody knows that you and Louise Lane disposed of your goods under false pretenses by tying up your heads in red handkerchiefs and 181 letting your customers draw their own conclusions. I don't know but some of us want our money back! Never mind, children, it was very clever of you!" she added, seeing that Winona was not sure whether she was in earnest.

And the girls found themselves being questioned and laughed at and made much of by a group of women, who wanted to know all about the Camp Fire, and the things the girls made, and the ways they earned money, and what they did with it, till Winona and Louise were fairly tired with answering questions.

They invited everybody to come out to the camp, and set a day. They took some more orders, and then they carried Miss Lawrence off across the lake and down the river, to see Camp Karonya. When she arrived they handed her over to Nataly, as was polite, and she and Mrs. Bryan showed her over the camp.

She investigated everything with the same brisk, fairy godmother expression that she had had when she took Winona and Louise under her wing, stayed to luncheon, and then expressed a desire to be taken down to the Scouts' camp, to see Billy. So two of the Blue Birds rowed her there.

After they had seen Miss Lawrence off, the girls became busy a little way down the river. Winona got there a little late and found that much had happened while she and Louise had gone off that morning. At first the idea of making the float had been to found it on the rowboats the Boy Scouts were willing to lend. But when a deputation, headed by Mr. Gedney, paddled 182 down, bringing the boats in question, it became painfully clear that four canoes would not support enough planks to hold twenty life-size girls. Neither would rowboats. At least, Mrs. Bryan and Mr. Gedney agreed that they wouldn't--most of the girls and all the boys were willing to take a chance.

When this turn of affairs arrived everyone felt very sad, and for a while it had looked as if Camp Karonya wasn't going to have a float in the lake carnival.

But just then along came that resourceful old gentleman, Mr. Sloane, with fishing-rod and a can of bait.

"Well, what's all the trouble?" he inquired genially of everyone in general. So they told him. Mr. Sloane did not hesitate a moment.

"I got a friend that owns some good, water-tight scows," said he most unexpectedly. "They ain't doin' nobody any good, and I guess he'd loan 'em to you, or, if wust come to wust, he'd let you have the use of 'em for maybe seventy-five cents apiece. Two scows are all you'd need to put the plankin' across."

He gave them directions as to where to go after the scows' owner, and ambled on in search of a quieter fishing-place. An embassy was sent after the scows immediately, and returned with them in triumph. They proved perfectly seaworthy, and quite equal to supporting all they would have to. So when Winona arrived on the scene after luncheon the girls had reached the stage of nailing the planks across.

They had bargained for the scows at seventy-five cents each, as Mr. Sloane had said they would be able 183 to, and promised to give them a coat of paint before they returned them. The boards, bought of the village carpenter, were more expensive. However, the girls thought they could venture to pay for them out of the treasury, on the strength of the orders ahead that they had taken. Marie and Edith were supervising things.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" Winona asked Marie, who was frowning thoughtfully over a hastily-drawn plan.

"Not unless you can help us with this design," Marie answered. "See here. The idea is to make a miniature Indian village. How would you group the tents so as to take up the least room and show best?"

"Why do you try to draw it?" asked Winona. "Why not do as generals do, make little paper tents and move them around till you get a tableau of the effect you want?"

The idea was new to Marie, but she liked it, and the three girls fell to constructing little paper cones, and arranging them on a square space that represented the float.

Presently one of the girls who was nailing dropped out with a pounded thumb, and Winona took up her hammer and went to work. She discovered that the driving of a nail straight, and making boards lie side by side evenly, is more of an art than people know.

They worked on the float most of that afternoon, except for a few of the girls who were told off to do the Scout mending, and they sat down near the carpenters and sewed sociably to the sound of the pounding. 184 They worked till six, and went to bed unusually early.

By the second day the platform was done, and proved to balance very well on the water, even with all the girls on it. Next Marie and her helpers went to making tents, for their own soldier tents were too unromantically shaped to be any good on a float. They wanted real Indian wigwams, or as near to them as they could get.

Marie bought unbleached muslin, and they dyed it the correct dark brown. They made three wigwams of this, the story-book-picture kind, with the crossed poles tied at the top, for a foundation. In each tent a squaw was to sit—or rather, at its door, for the tepees, in order to fit on the limited space of the float, had to be made rather small, and would have been a tight fit for even the smallest squaw. Some of the girls were to dress as chiefs, and were working hard on war-bonnets and leggings. Even Puppums was to grace the occasion, guarding a pappoose—little Lilian Maynard, the smallest Blue Bird. There was some idea of including Hike the Camp Cat, now a cheerful and opulent-looking kitten, but it was thought better of, because he yowled so when they rehearsed him.

When the tents and costumes were done, the brushwood heaps stacked, the floor covered with twigs and moss, the girls tried grouping themselves as they were to appear on the final night. And it proved that there was not room on the platform for three tents and nineteen girls, even if seven *were* small.

Marie stepped off and looked it over. 185

"There are just two girls too many," she said. "Three, if I were on board. I'll eliminate Marie Hunter to begin with. I'm going to decorate my own canoe. You'd better draw lots for the other two to stay out."

Everyone on the float looked at everyone else. Nobody wanted to drop out, but nobody felt like being selfish.

"I'll drop out!" said the whole of Camp Karonya in chorus, after a minute's dead silence.

"I'll go in your canoe, Marie—have you forgotten?" asked Edith. "The plans you made included me."

"So they did," said Marie in a relieved voice. "Well, perhaps the rest could crowd a little closer."

"I'm afraid not, and be sure that nobody'd tip into the water," vetoed Mrs. Bryan. "I'm the one to stay ashore, girls. I'll gaze at you with fond proprietorship while you get first prize."

But there rose up a storm of objections to that. "No you won't, either! There won't any of us be in it if you aren't, Opeechee!" till she had to give up giving up.

Winona braced herself a little, and "I'm out, too," she said gayly. "There's no use asking me to stay--I don't like your old float!"

She sprang ashore, and went over and stood by Marie.

The girls protested, and several more volunteered to drop out, but nobody meant it quite as hard as Winona did. So the Indian village went on being erected, and 186 the girls went on practising an Indian dance which should take up the least possible room. Meanwhile Winona rounded up the finished mending and rowed up the river to deliver the latest basket of mended socks and shirts. She had made her sacrifice in all good faith and earnestness, but she felt as if she didn't want to see them going gayly on without her--at least, not right *now*.

She wasn't conscious of behaving any way but as she generally did, but she must have, for both Tom and Billy watched her uneasily, as she sat in the boat and talked to them after they had taken the mending, while she waited for the orderly to come with her money.

"What's the matter, Win?" asked Tom bluntly in a minute. "You're down and out--I can see that. Who's been doing anything to you?"

Winona shook her head. "Nobody."

"Then what have *you* been doing?" asked Billy. They stood over her, both looking so worried that Winona felt like hugging them, or crying, or both.

"It isn't anything," she said. "Except--well, I did it myself. Somebody had to stay off the float, because there wasn't room for everyone, so I elected myself. And--and--oh, I *did* want to be in that carnival! But"--she straightened bravely, and smiled up into the two indignant faces--"I guess it's all right, after all. If I could decorate my rowboat it would be all right, but I can't, because they're going to need it to carry properties in." 187

"It's a confounded shame," said Billy Lee, "and after you planned it, and all! You ought to have a float of your own. I'll tell you, Winona, why don't you decorate a canoe?"

"Only reason is, I haven't a canoe," laughed Winona--they were all three sitting in a row in the grass by this time.

"I have," said Billy, "and you're more than welcome to it, and to all the help I can give you on it."

"And I've got some change you're welcome to for decorations," added Tom.

"Oh, how perfectly lovely!" said Winona, jumping up with her face aglow. "Indeed I will decorate it, and thank you both, ever and ever so much. I have ever so many lovely ideas for decorations. Billy!"

She stopped short.

"Well?" said Billy.

"Would you mind being in the canoe with me?"

"Sure, I'd love to," said Billy heartily, whether he really meant it or not.

"Oh, thank you *so* much!" cried Winona again.

"That's the way to take it!" said Tom. "We'll get you up a canoe, between us, that'll make your old Camp Fire float look like a bad quarter and a plugged nickel--see if we don't!"



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Winona and Florence paddled back to Camp Karonya with the latest bundle of mending, very, very happy. When they came ashore, they were met by a committee consisting of Adelaide, Louise, Helen and Marie.

"We've got a plan for your being in the picture," said they very nearly in unison. "We can decorate the boat with the apparatus in it----"

But Winona waved a lordly hand.

"Boat me no boats," said she. "I'm going to have Billy Lee's canoe to decorate. We're going out this afternoon, or maybe to-morrow afternoon, up to Wampoag where the shops are, and we're going to buy out the shops with decorations. Going to get honorable mention, anyway!"

"Oh, then you'd really rather!" said Helen. "I'm *so* glad. But it won't seem natural not to have you on the float, Winnie!"

"Just as natural as not having Marie," said Winona.

"No," said Marie quietly, "not exactly. You're like the spirit of the whole thing, Win, and I think they ought to have you."

"You can't," said Winona, sitting down on the grass and drawing her knees up to her chin.

"We could if we canned Nataly," said Louise the rebel, half under her breath.

"Well, you can't do that," said the other girls in a breath. 189

The truth was, Nataly Lee was the one dark spot--the one cinder, as you might say--in the Camp Fire. She did not particularly like doing her share of the work, she could not be made to take an interested part in the work for honor beads, and she acted generally as if she was a caller who was much older and more languid than the others. It was, in short, very much as Louise had said when she offered to join--she was like a kitten who refused to be anything but a cat.

"I don't know what Nataly's doing here, anyway," Louise went on. "And we'd be a lot happier without her. I wish she'd go home and look after her complexion. She can't do it properly here--anybody can see that!"

"Can't do what?" said a languid voice. It isn't a good thing to discuss your friends too freely if they're anywhere at all around, because they are exceedingly likely to overhear or partly hear. And this is just what happened now. Nataly herself walked out of the strip of woods that separated the camp from the river, and sat down by them.

"I thought I heard you talking about me," she said.

"We were," said Louise, quite unruffled. "At least I was. I was saying that you couldn't look after your complexion properly here in the woods, and that I thought you'd be happier away from our rude young society!"

Nataly did not see in the least that Louise was laughing at her, but Helen did, and gave Louise a severe 190 pinch. "Guying" was something that the camp spirit allowed only if the victim knew what was being done to her. But where Nataly was concerned it was hard to make Louise behave.

"Well, you know," said Nataly, "I am thinking of going home. It makes me nervous, the idea of Aunt Lydia being near enough to pounce down on me every minute. She is *so* energetic. And my nerves are nearly all right now."

"Then you really think you will go back?" said Winona.

"I really do, as soon as the carnival is over," said Nataly.

"Well, as I said," said Winona hastily, for Louise looked as if she were going to suggest an earlier departure, "I'm going up to Wampoag this afternoon to buy things with the boys."

"I have a 'gagement to make baskets with Frances," said Florence, "so I can't go with you."

"I will if you want me," offered Louise. "I have various things I want to say to you alone."

"That sounds dark and dreadful!" said Helen good-naturedly. "I think we'd better not volunteer to go along, Marie!"

"We couldn't, anyway," Marie reminded her. "There's a lot to do on those war-bonnets yet."

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So that afternoon Louise, Winona, Billy and Tom paddled up to the summer resort in quest of decorations. 191

"Have you any idea how you're going to trim the canoe?" asked Louise.

"I've thought it all out," said Winona. "I found the idea in an old book of ballads Marie brought along. It was called 'The Ship o' the Fiend.'"

"Pretty name!" said Louise. "Who's going to be the fiend? Please don't all speak at once!"

"I'll be the goat," said Billy. "Winnie told me a little about it. The ballad was about a girl who went off with an old fiance, and he turned out to be a real live demon."

"Yes," said Winona, "the tall topmast no taller was than he," it says.

"Well, I draw the line at stilts," said Billy sleepily. He was curled down in the bottom of the boat basking in the sunshine, for Louise had insisted on taking a paddle. "What do I have to do?"

"The first thing," said Winona, "is to wake up enough to sit up and be consulted. How much copper wire ..."

The rest was inaudible, for Billy moved closer to Winona, who talked to him mysteriously under her breath. The others could hear scraps like "Japanese auctioneer ..." "fifty yards ..." "red paper muslin," and such illuminating fragments.

"How much money have you got for me to spend, Tommy?" Winona broke off to inquire.

"Four whole dollars," he said, "earned by splitting wood for a farmer." 192

"I certainly am obliged," she said, "and I'll pay it back."

"You'll do no such thing!" he said. "I should hope I could give my own sister a lone four dollars once in awhile!"

"All right, you can," said Winona soothingly. She pulled out the paper the boys had secured and given her, and began to read it aloud.

"Cash prizes in the canoe class, first, twenty-five dollars, second, ten dollars, three third prizes, five dollars each. Now you see, if I get a third prize I'll be a dollar in, and all the glory reflected on Camp Karonya besides!"

They took a street-car when they got to Wampoag, because the shopping district was a long ways off, and it was a hot day anyway. Tom and Louise watched the other two with curiosity, as they went from store to store, buying things that it seemed impossible could fit into each other; copper wire, red tinsel by the box, paper muslin in what seemed unlimited quantities, though it was really only a little over a dollar's worth. Then Winona went into one Japanese store alone, and came out with a bagful of paper lanterns and a knobby bundle which she refused to undo or show. They hunted all over three streets for Greek fire, before it occurred to Billy to go back to the hardware store where they had bought their copper wire. He came out with three boxes of it, labelled "Blue," "Green" and "White," and seemed rather sad because they had no lavender or gray fire in stock. 193

"They bought a pig and some ring-bo-ree, and no end of Stilton cheese!" chanted Louise softly. "How on earth are you going to connect all that crazy stuff?"

"You'll know, all in good time, my dear," said Winona sedately. "We can go home now. The worst is over."

"We deserve a soda, at least, for all this," said Billy.

"Marble-dust," said Tom solemnly. "Some day, Bill, if you keep on drinking sodas, you'll turn into a statue, and your sorrowing relatives will have to put you up in the hall for an ornament."

"Glad I'm as lovely as all that comes to!" said Billy with a grin. "They couldn't do it to you, old fellow--you aren't pretty enough!"

"He is pretty, too," said Louise stoutly. "Somebody told me only yesterday that they thought Tom was so poetic-looking, and had a striking head."

Billy laughed out loud, and Tom wriggled.

"I take it all back, Louise," he said. "He *is* beautiful."

Tom gave a sort of mournful growl.

"Oh, cut it out, Billy!" he said. "If you really want that soda, here's a drug-store."

"A striking head," mused his sister, cocking her own head on one side, to look at Tom from this new point of view. "I really think you have."

"If ever I meet the fellow who said that, he'll find out I have a striking fist," muttered Thomas darkly, 194 walking into the drug-store ahead of the rest, and sitting down at a table in the back. "Four walnut sundaes, please. No, I don't want 'em all myself. The others are coming in the door now."

For the next few days Winona, at a point half-way between her camp and the Scout's camp, worked steadily over the paper lanterns she had bought. She covered them all with white paper, and cut out holes in the paper after the fashion of eyes, nose and mouth, until, if you were not too critical, they looked like big oval skulls. If you *were* critical, they might remind you, it is true, of jack-o'-lanterns, but nobody was unkind enough to say so but Tom. There were forty of them altogether, and when they were all covered, and brought down to camp out of the danger of being rained on, and festooned about Winona's tent, the effect was truly awful. Tom, who had been watching his sister's performance with interest, came over one day with five little paper-mache lanterns which he presented to her, two in the shape of black cats, and three like owls.

"I don't know yet what you're going to do," he said, "but if Bill's going to wear horns and hoofs, and those things over the cot are meant for skulls, I should think these would come in handy."

"They're just exactly what I wanted!" said Winona with rapture, hanging them with the rest. "Now I've nothing to do but my dress."

She showed him several yards of black paper muslin and a sheet of gilt paper. "It doesn't look promising, 195 I know," she said, "but it will be quite nice, I think, when it's done."

And it really was. Helen helped her to fit it, and they made it with the dull side out, close-fitting, and covered with the stars and crescents of the traditional witch-dress. She was done with it, even to the pointed hat and black half-mask, in very good time.

"Now," she said to the boys, standing over Billy's canoe where it had been pulled up in the grass, "now comes the tug of war. Tom, you said you would help me."

"I did," said he. "What shall I do?"

"Then please nail these poles to the end of the canoe. They're about six feet high, aren't they?"

"Yes. Do you want them sticking straight up into the air?"

"Straight up, please," she said.

"Billy's flying around in the town like a hen with its head cut off," said Tom as he proceeded to do what his sister asked, "trying to buy something he won't tell about. And I found Louise and Helen up at Camp Karonya, winding tinsel into balls like fury. Strikes me you ought to share that five you won't get with the whole crowd of us."

"So I will when I get it," said Winona serenely. "Now will you please brace those end-poles thoroughly, and nail cross-pieces on them about a foot from the top?"

"It's easy to tell people how to do things," said 196 Tom; but he was clever at carpentering, and had it done in a very short time.

Then Winona took the copper wire she had bought, and strung it from end to end of the cross-pieces, till the effect was something like that of a half-done cat's cradle. Then she stood off and looked at her work, walking round and round it,

as a kitten looks at a mirror.

"That wire ought to bear about twenty pounds, don't you think?" she asked.

"I don't see why not," said Tom, sitting down on the grass to watch her.

"Now I'll begin, then," she said. "Thank you for making the foundation."

She took up the copper wire again, and strung more lines of it from end to end of the canoe, and one around the gunwale. She laced still more up and down in irregular points, up and down the side-wires, till the effect was that of an irregularly pointed fence, or crown, as high as the end pieces in some parts, and low enough, at the ends, to show the people seated in it.

"Looks like a cross-section of Alps," said Tom critically. "Are you going to be the Blue Alsatian Mountains?"

"There are two classes of people who should never see a thing half-done," answered his sister, standing off again to get the effect.

"Thank you," said Tom.

"Doesn't it look like anything else at all?" she 197 asked, abandoning her superior attitude, and throwing herself on his mercy.

"Well, something like a fever-chart," said he.

Winona said no more--there didn't seem to be any use. She picked up her ball of red tinsel, and began to wind it around and within, and across, every point of the "fever-chart," till there was a solid network. It was not a bad imitation of a springing fire.

"Now do you see?" she said. "That's a big, red blaze coming out of the canoe, and when we've lighted the Greek fire inside it ought to look real enough to burn you."

"Not bad," admitted Tom. "But I don't see its connection with a black bonnet and forty jack-o'-lanterns."

"You will by-and-bye," said his sister, going on with her work. It went very smoothly after that, except that Puppums *would* jump inside, and then looked at her in a wronged way because the canoe did not float off. After the tinsel was on nothing remained to do but to wrap the end-pieces with black muslin, so they would not show at night, and to cover the canoe with the same material. The lanterns did not need to be hung till the last moment.

The night of the carnival Camp Karonya, very much excited, sailed down the river in all the glory of its fleet, about six. The Indian village was a great success as far as looks went. Whether it would be as handsome a float as the ones it would have to compete with nobody 198 could tell yet. As a canoe takes less time to engineer than a float, and also as the boys hadn't come yet, Winona stayed behind a little while. At about seven Tom and Billy came up the river in another of the Scouts' canoes. Winona, in her witch costume, with her lanterns, was waiting for them by the decorated canoe.

Billy was most gorgeous. He had hired a red Mephisto costume, evidently from a real costumer--horns, hoofs and all. His full grandeur didn't show till he sprang out on the grass, because he had modestly shrouded himself in a raincoat, and his mask was in its pocket. But he snapped the mask on, tossed the coat off, and struck an attitude, before he helped Tom to lay the canoe in the water.

"You certainly are grand and gorgeous, Billy," said Winona. "All you need is a spotlight running round after you to look just like the man in the opera."

"I feel like a freak," admitted Billy. "Got everything, Winona? We'd better be starting."

Winona veiled her own splendors with an evening wrap of Mrs. Bryan's which had, fortunately, been brought along, and stepped in. Tom trailed behind.

"I believe I'm frightened," said Winona. "What about you, Billy?"

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he said. "We can't very well upset, tied to a string of other craft, and maybe we'll get a fourth prize--if they only have four entries in the canoe class."

"We'll get one anyway!" declared Winona 199 proudly, throwing her head back and forgetting to be nervous.

They were early at the dock. The Camp float was moored quite a little way from the place where they had to be, but they could see each other, and called across. After that Winona did not feel so lonely. The boys helped her to light and tie on the lanterns, all so realistically like skulls, and when she saw how very ghostly they looked she felt that she hadn't lived in vain.

"Have you the skeleton, Billy?" she demanded anxiously of Mephisto, who was wrestling with a bundle in the back canoe.

"Here it is," he said, finally producing it. "I had rather a time getting old Hiraoka to rent it, but an auctioneer will do anything for enough yen."

As he spoke he unwrapped a neat, papier-mache skeleton of nearly life-size, which was of Japanese origin, and which, as he said, he had rented from the Japanese store of Mr. Tashima Hiraoka for this night only.

"Billy!" said Winona remorsefully, "how much did you pay for Mr. Bones?"

"No time to worry about that now," said Billy. "Where do you want him put?"

Winona saw that he was right, and put off insisting on paying for the skeleton till time should be less precious than now. They swung it above the tinsel flames, on wire loops prepared for it, so that it turned 200 gently, as if roasting. Tom looked on in respectful admiration.

"Here's the last thing," said Billy, producing the mysterious bundle that had excited Louise so the day they were shopping for decorations.

"Those are Billy's idea," said Winona, pulling the objects out as she spoke. "They just put the finishing touch on, don't they, Tom?"

"I should say they did!" said Tom appreciatively. They were twenty small red demons rather like Billy, and the same number of tiny skeletons, all with waggle-some hands and feet.

"Blessed forever be Japanese stores!" said Winona. "Just hang them around carelessly, boys, as if they were hovering over the fire, you know. Billy, do you think you can make the demons look pleased and the skeletons unhappy?"

"You never know what you can do till you try," said Billy with his usual poise. He pulled some wire out of the back canoe, which, like the Mother's Bag in the Swiss Family Robinson, seemed to have everything in the world in it. The boys set to work with such a will that the last demon was wriggling naturally as life, and there was ten minutes yet to spare, when they were done.

## 201 CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Billy helped Winona in, felt for the matches, and got in himself. Tom pushed them off from shore. It was all done with the solemnity of a funeral procession. Winona looked at the boys' excited faces, and laughed.

"We're not being rowed off to execution," she explained, though she felt a little excited herself. "I'm perfectly calm--O-oh! Gracious! What's that?"

"That" was a long, unearthly wail which seemed to come from the inside of the canoe itself. It increased and quavered and howled and died down again.

"Oh, that's us," said Billy placidly. "Tom and I borrowed Boots Morris's father's Gabriel horn and fastened it into the canoe this afternoon. Forgot to tell you. Don't you like it?"

"Lovely!" gasped Winona. "Only--only it was a little sudden, the first time. I thought Mr. Bones was expressing his feelings."

"It adds to the effect all right," said Billy proudly.

"It certainly does!" said Winona. "Yes, we have a tow-rope, marshal. Tie us on, please."

"Well, you do look like you came from somewhere else!" said the marshal--he was the dock owner by day--as he fastened the "Ship o' the Fiend" into line. "I don't want anything more like D. T.'s than you be!"

"That's what I call a delicate compliment," said Billy, lifting his mask so he could grin with freedom.

"M' yes, I suppose so," said Winona doubtfully. "Are we going to start soon, marshal?" 202

"In about ten minutes," said the marshal, seeming to be still entranced with the canoe and its decorations. "They burnt one o' my great-grandmothers, a couple o' hundred years ago, for doin' not much worse'n you be," he added.

"We ought to get something, then," said Winona, thinking more of a possible prize than of the marshal's family history.

"You sure ought!" he said darkly, handing them a number and passing on to the next boat.

The ten minutes seemed very long and tedious, but between eating some sandwiches which Winona had thoughtfully provided, exchanging compliments with the neighboring boats, and getting their Greek fire ready to set off, they passed somehow. The whistle blew, and the long trail of boats, canoes, and floats started on its slow and winding way. The float was tied far off, at the beginning of the procession, where they could not see it. Marie's canoe was just in sight, but not near enough to talk to--a big silver cobweb spotted with lantern-flies, and Marie and Edith dressed as the Spider and the Fly, at either end of it.

Finally the whistle blew. Billy tucked a final piece of sandwich beneath his mask, and resigned himself to tending the Greek fire for the rest of the evening. As for Winona, finding nothing particular to do, she pulled a book out from under a cushion and began to read.

"Winona, would you kindly lay away that piece of literatuah and wo'k the Gabriel ho'n?" asked Billy in the softest and Kentuckiest of voices. Winona had observed that when Billy's Southern accent reasserted itself he was generally in deadly earnest. She meekly put the book away and began to press the bulb of the horn at regular intervals.

"Oh, I do wish we could see us, and be us, too!" she said in one of the intervals.

"M'm! Don't I?" said Billy. "I don't know, though. Maybe we'd be disappointed."

"I know we wouldn't," said Winona confidently, and pressed the horn again, which put a stop to conversation.

Meanwhile Tom, on the grandstand, was seeing them, and being very proud of his relationship to the "Ship o' the Fiend." The black-covered canoe, with its belt of shivering fire and its weird occupants, showed up gloriously. The irregularly hung lanterns looked more like skulls than Winona had dared to hope in her wildest moments. All the little demons and skeletons danced realistically on their invisible wires in the air, and, crown of all, the nearly-life-size skeleton swung above, with the witch and the demon watching him from either end, as he roasted above the Greek fire.

An occasional shriek from the Gabriel horn gave the final touch. The whole thing was like a vision out of a Poe story, or some German goblin-legend. The people took to clapping as they went by.

"I believe they're clapping for us!" said Winona awedly, as a burst of it came to their ears over the water.

"Sure they are," said Billy. "Shows their good 204 sense, too. It's a mighty good looking canoe we have."

"Can we photograph you, please?" said a polite voice before Winona could answer--and lo, the reporter's boat!

"This *is* glory!" said Winona, snapping down her mask, and being frankly delighted. "Just think, Billy, we may be in the paper!"

The reporter asked questions and fussed with his flashlight apparatus, and finally took two exposures. They kept very still while the flashlight was exploding, and answered the reporters in full.

"The designer of your decorations certainly was very clever, and had a vivid imagination," ended the smallest reporter as the press-boat went on its way.

Winona sat up straight, and looked very proud.

"At last I'm appreciated!" she said. "Don't you wish you had a vivid imagination, too, Billy?"

"If you straighten up much more," said Billy, leaning over to light fresh Greek fire, "you will certainly hit the decorations, and something will bust."

"I don't care!" and Winona laughed excitedly. "It's my first chance at being famous, and you can't think how nice it is! Listen to that!"

The applause along the banks was certainly continuous enough to make someone older and staidier than Winona happy. The canoes were making the circuit of the upper part of the lake now. In the centre was the royal float, where the king and queen of the carnival sat.

When the procession had gone down one side of 205 the lake and up the other it would make a circle about this royal float, and the prizes would be awarded.

They were almost through with this, only a little way from the royal float, when a small green canoe full of sightseers whirled against them, sent by some sudden twist of wind or water. And--neither Winona nor Billy could ever understand how it happened--the shock of the blow, or perhaps some mischievous person in the other boat, parted the ropes that held Winona's canoe lightly to the canoes before and behind it, and sent them far to one side of the lake, out of the radius of the lights. The wind, naturally, took this particular time to blow hard. The decorations made the canoe top-heavy and hard to guide, and they dared not paddle fast for fear of upsetting. They could see from their outer darkness the canoes they had been between being hastily tied together.

Winona paddled frantically. "Do you think we can get back in time to be judged?" she panted.

"We'll try," said Billy, working his paddle more slowly, but with greater effect than Winona's.

"No--oh, Billy, Billy! There goes the signal--they've given the launch prize, and they are to give the float and rowboat prizes right afterwards, and then the canoes! There goes the gun again. Oh, *dear!*"

Winona had really been working harder than she should have over her canoe decorations, and helping with the float besides, as well as doing her routine camp-work. She had been "all keyed up" by the evening's excitement, and her hopes of a prize, and this sudden 206 downfall of her hopes was too much for her self-control. Billy saw two large tears roll down her cheeks from under her mask.

"Poor Winnie! It certainly is a shame!" he said.

"I suppose that horrid little gunboat canoe named 'Flossie' will get our prize," mourned Winona, casting fortitude to the wind--which must have carried it quite a way, for it was blowing more and more strongly. "I know we'd have had one of the fourth prizes, too!"

"You have the glory, anyway," he said. "Everybody applauded us more than they did anything else except that big Queen Elizabeth float."

"But I wanted the money, and I wanted to have the Camp Fire have a prize! There, Billy, I won't be a coward any more. I'm tired, I think, or I wouldn't have acted like this kind of an idiot," she said bravely, pushing up her mask to dry her eyes, and trying to smile.

"You've worn yourself out over this decoration business, that's what the matter is," said Billy. "Do you mind telling me what you want the money for?"

"No, certainly not. I wanted to get a pair of silk stockings apiece for Adelaide and me. I know she wants a pair dreadfully, because she never had them, and if I got a pair like them for myself she'd be more apt to take them--and--well, I wanted a pair, too!"

Billy registered an inward vow that his Aunt Lydia should manage it just as soon as it was humanly possible. He knew that she would do more than that for Winona, for whom she had conceived a strong liking.

"Poor kid, she's all worked up about it," he murmured, forgetting his own disappointment, for he, too, had hoped that his canoe would get a prize.

But help was in sight. About five minutes later (though Winona and Billy always swore it was a full half hour) they felt a violent rocking, and heard the insistent wuff-wuff-wuff of a steam launch.

"Here, catch a-hold and tie yourself on," said the welcome voice of the marshal out of the darkness, without the least waste of words or time.

As soon as Billy's excited fingers could do it they were fastened to the end of the marshal's official launch, and bobbing off towards the royal float at a tremendous rate of speed.

"How did you come to come hunt for us?" Winona called to the marshal as they went.

"You were knocked out o' line an' got blowed away, didn't you?" answered the marshal.

"Then we're going to be judged--we're going to be judged!" she rejoiced. "Oh, do you think we may get a prize yet?"

"Shouldn't wonder but you got something," said the laconic marshal. "Here we be."

He bent over and unfastened them.

"You're late, you see," he said, "and you'll just have to paddle out an' get your sentence alone."

Winona's heart beat frantically, but she straightened up in the canoe, and she and Billy, standing up at front and back (it was risky work with the top-heavy decorations, but they never thought of that till afterwards), paddled out into the open space before the 208 royal float. All the other entries had been judged. Over in the place where the prize-winners were Winona had time to see that the Camp Fire float and Marie's canoe were herded with the others. So even if she got nothing the glory of Camp Karonya was safe. It was trying to wait there alone, with everyone staring, but it did not last long. The red-and-gold herald came forward very soon.

"First prize, canoe class!" he said--and Winona almost lost her balance. "Awarded to Miss Winona Merriam of Camp Karonya, and Mr. William Lee, of Boy Scouts' Patrol Number Six, for their entry 'The Ship of the Fiend.' Twenty-five dollars."

The clapping burst out again. When it was done Winona and Billy started to paddle back to the prize-winners' enclosure, but a gesture of the herald stopped them. They paused, a little puzzled.

"Do they want us to say thank you?" wondered Winona.

Before Billy could turn the canoe the left-hand red-and-gold herald walked forth.

"Silver loving cup for greatest originality of conception also goes to Miss Merriam and Mr. Lee," read the herald.

They were clapped again--they could see Tom, on the grandstand, standing up and waving his hat--and then at last the marshal beckoned them to cross to the sparkling ring of other craft in the background. The winning launches, floats, rowboats and canoes were to act as a guard of honor to escort the royal float back to the grandstand, where the court carriages for the king and queen of the carnival waited.



They went to this place at last, and paused by their friends, the Camp Fire float and Marie's canoe.

"We got a fourth prize!" called Marie gayly as Winona stopped by her. "Oh, Winona, you darling! You always were a mascot!"

"Marie always was an angel," thought Winona to herself. Edith was not so selfless.

"Congratulations, Win," she said bravely, holding out a tinsel-wrapped wrist across the canoes. "I'm glad you got it-- but I wish we could have had something better. I think we deserved it."

"You certainly did," said Winona warmly. "But it doesn't much matter, you know, Edith. The main thing people will notice is that Camp Karonya landed three prizes. And think of that loving-cup sitting up, with 'Won by Camp Karonya,' on it!"

"Aren't you going to have your name put on it?" asked Edith.

"Certainly not!" said Winona. "It's a Camp trophy. I shall put my name on the back of the check for twenty-five dollars. That is pleasure enough."

"I think we've 'done noble,' all of us," said Marie. The canoes were paddling off by now, but the going was slow, and they could still talk.

"What did the float get?" asked Winona. "You know we were blown off in the dark, and lost track of events till the marshal came after us." 210

"Second," answered both girls together.

"You were the belle of the ball," added Marie.

"Well, I don't think we did so badly," declared Edith. "A first, second and a fourth prize all to one camp. I hope nobody thinks we got more than our share."

"We didn't," said Winona. "Oh, I'm so happy!"

"I'm rather pleased myself," said Billy's quiet voice from the other end of the canoe.

But it was not until the royal float had been escorted home, and everything was broken up, and Tom and Billy were paddling Winona back to camp, that he said what he really thought.

"I'm mighty glad you got that first prize," he said. "You deserved it if anybody ever did, for being such a little sport about dropping out of the float. I'd blow a lot of that money in right away if I were you, to congratulate myself."

"After I've paid back what I owe certain people," said Winona, "I shall divide with the Camp treasury. Even then I'll have a lot more than I ever thought of getting."

"Anyway, you were a real sport, and you deserved everything that was coming to you," repeated Billy, in which Tom agreed with him. And when your brother approves of you and says so you can generally be sure that you have done something remarkably right.

## 211 CHAPTER NINETEEN

Next day was the "cold gray dawn of the morning after." Not that it was particularly cold or gray, but there was all the unnauling of the float to do, and the dismantling of the two decorated canoes. The girls wound the tinsel off carefully for use on future Christmas trees, and packed away in a box what other decorations were not perishable, for you never know when you're going to need things. Otherwise they sat around and gloated softly over Camp Karonya's exceeding brilliancy in carrying off prizes in large quantities.

Mrs. Bryan would not let Winona divide her money with the Camp, because they had enough already to see them through the rest of the time they were to spend there; and then, too, the second prize that the float had won was fifteen dollars.

Nothing else memorable happened that day, except that Nataly Lee left for home. She was thinner and in better condition than she had been when she came, but she frankly didn't like the life. To her, carrying water, instead of being a lark, was a nuisance. She had no particular pride in working for beads, and it was thought she was hungry for paper novels. It worried her, too, that she was getting burned brown. So she went back to her mother. The girls saw her off, and sang her a cheer, and were as good as they could be. But it is not to be denied that Camp Karonya felt a little relief at her going. 212

After that nothing happened but regular camp work for three days. And then Louise proceeded to distinguish herself. It was to be expected.

Tom and Billy had taken Winona and Louise off for a day's fishing in the canoe. As usual, Winona and Louise provided the lunch, the boys the fishing-tackle and the canoe, and the fish were to be divided at the end of the day. They had fished most of the lazy, sunny morning, and it was noon. They climbed out of the canoe by a spring, washed their hands, and set out the lunch; the canoe was too fishy to be used as a dining-hall.

"Do you think that four of us can possibly eat all that?" inquired Billy, eyeing the piles of sandwiches, the veal loaf, the whole cake and the can of pears which graced the paper napkins on the grass.

"Well," explained Winona, "the truth is, Louise and I rather doubled up on this lunch. We were both afraid there wouldn't be enough, and each went separately and brought half a chocolate cake. You see it's cut down the middle. I merely joined the twin halves for the sake of looks. But do you think that's too many sandwiches for four people with real appetites?"

"I don't," said Tom decidedly. "I'll attend to anything that's left over. A very nice amount of lunch--just right. Watch me!"

But they did not watch him because they were otherwise engaged. None of them had small appetites, and they all did good work. Just the same when they were through there were a generous piece of cake, a fat slice of veal loaf, and seven sandwiches left. 213

"I told you so," said Billy. "Here, Tommy, it is up to you. Have these seven nice sandwiches."

"Can't be done," said Tom regretfully. "I've had that many. I had three pieces of cake, too."

"Doesn't matter!" said Billy. "A gentleman's word of honor----"

He prepared to jump on Tom and hold him, while Louise held a sandwich ready to insert.

"Ow!" said Tom. "Help! This is cruelty to animals. Pry him off, Winnie!"

"Oh, let up, please!" said Winona. "You know, he might explode, and mother'd feel badly."

Billy took one knee off, and Tom wriggled more vigorously. Louise relented, and the two girls were trying to pull Billy off Tom. They had almost succeeded, when a little rustle behind them made Winona, whose senses were the most alert, let go and turn. The others followed her eyes. They sat up and looked, and Tom jumped to his feet and began to dust himself off.

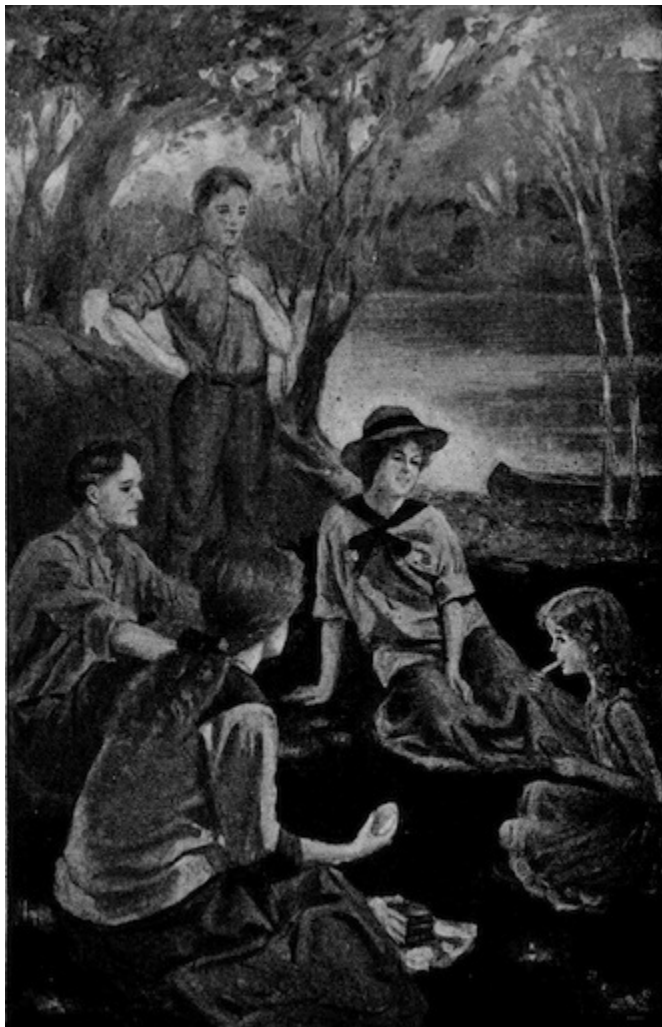
The newcomer, who was a most forlorn and bedraggled little girl, spoke very welcome words.

"Me's very hundry!" she said pathetically.

"You poor little thing!" said Louise. "Come here, dear; there's lots for you to eat." The little girl made straight for her. Louise got out a fresh paper napkin, and piled sandwiches, loaf, cake and all on it.

"Wait a minute," said Billy. "Is all that good for so little a girl--hadn't you better give her one at a time?"

Louise held the veal loaf poised in air on her fork. "Will your mother let you eat this?" she asked.



THE CHILD BEGAN TO EAT EVERYTHING AT ONCE

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The bedraggled small child sat down on the grass, as if the words were an invitation. She was a pretty, dirty child of perhaps five, dressed only in a soiled and ragged underwaist and petticoat, and with a mane of very long and heavy hair, all tangles and elf-locks. Her hair was yellow and her eyes big and blue, and she would have been pretty had she been cared-for looking.

"Ain't got any mother," she said, "just Vicky. She lets me."

"Poor little thing!" said Louise again, and handed her the veal loaf. The child began to eat everything at once, with an eagerness which made it certain she had told the truth, at least, about being hungry.

"What's your name, kiddie? You'll tell me, won't you?" asked Billy, when she seemed to have taken the edge off her appetite. He bent down to her with a sympathetic expression which he possessed at times, and which--or something about him--won the hearts of most small children he had dealings with.

"Sandy," she said through large mouthfuls.

"Sandy what?" inquired Louise.

"Sandy Mitchell. Gimme more cake?"

As she had had two large slices, it was thought best not to give her any more.

"Mercy, no!" said Winona, as Louise was cutting it, in spite of prudence. "Not another bit. We don't want her to die on our hands. You'd better come over here by the spring, dear, and let me wash your hands."

Sandy got up immediately, with the placid remark, "It might-a given me a pain, anyway," and allowed her 215 hands to be washed, and dried on a fresh paper napkin.

"Poor little cowed thing!" exclaimed Louise at this instant obedience. "Sandy, dear, won't your people be worried about you?"

"Nope," said Sandy.

"And where do you live?"

"Way, way off," she said. "We just comed. I'll show you to-morrow."

"Poor little dear thing!" said Louise. "How pretty she is! Winnie, I've a good mind to adopt her."

"Having only five at home," murmured Tom.

"From the way she talks her people wouldn't care," said Louise. "Maybe Camp Karonya could take care of her. We will till we go back, anyway."

"She must belong to one of those poor families along the west branch," said Tom. "Three miles away, and we can't possibly get there by canoeing, because we'd have to paddle back seven miles before we could paddle over the three. Who's going to walk three miles and a half by the thermometer to take the lady home? Don't all speak at once."

"Do you live up there?" Louise asked her. "And does your father drink?"

"Yep," said Sandy. "Favver? Course he dwinks. Evvybody dwinks."

"Think of being brought up to think things like that," said Louise.

"Don't you think," suggested Winona, "that we'd better take her back to camp? I don't know the way to the place Tom talks about, and maybe it would be best 216 for Mrs. Bryan to take her anyway, if they do drink."

"Good idea," said everybody. Sandy herself seemed pleased, and attached herself to them as readily as a stray puppy would have done. They cleared up leisurely, then got back into the canoe, taking the child in, too. It was rather a close fit, though it was an eighteen-foot canoe, but they managed it. She was no more trouble than Puppums would have been--Puppums, fortunately, had been left with Florence. They had a good day with the fishing, and trailed into Camp Karonya at six with fish for breakfast; and Sandy.

"Good luck!" were Tom's parting words. "We'll come to-morrow and help you take her back, if you like."

"You needn't bother," said his sister. "We'll take the faithful rowboat."

"We aren't going to take her back!" insisted Louise. "I'm going to adopt her. Sandy, wouldn't you like to live with me? I'd dress you in nice clothes and give you a dolly."

"An' five cents?" demanded Sandy, "An' things to eat?"

"Oh, the poor baby!" said Louise. "She's had to think about money and food and grown-up things like the poor little children you read about in the pamphlets. Yes, indeed, you shall, Sandy."

"She looks well-fed," said Tom. "Well, good luck. Don't get a reputation for collecting them--you mayn't be able to dispose of orphans as easily as you can kittens." 217

They parted, and Louise carried Sandy into camp. They arrived as supper was about ready. The Blue Birds carried the

fish off to the ice-box (it was literally a box, a very ingenious arrangement of sawdust and wood which had meant a bead for Elizabeth) and the rest clustered about Louise's treasure-trove.

"Better find out if she really needs adopting," advised Marie as they sat around the long table, and Sandy exercised an appetite as large as her noon one.

"With a drunken father, and no mother, and looking like that?" fired up Louise. "I'm going to wash her after supper."

There seemed no connection between washing her and adopting her, but there evidently was to Louise.

"Want me to help?" offered Winona. "It ought to be more fun than washing Puppums."

"I hope she won't howl and try to climb over the side of the tub, the way he does," said Louise. "Yes, thank you, I'd love to be helped."

A warm bath in a foot-tub, following directly on a large meal of corn fritters, baked potatoes and huckle-berries, ought nearly to have killed Sandy, but it didn't.

"I never dreamed you meant to do more than wash her face and hands," protested Marie, who, as the guardian of the Blue Birds, had ideas about such things. But it was too late. Anyway, there was no visible effect. Sandy awakened next morning, well, happy, and still hungry. They had given her Nataly's bunk with Mrs. Bryan. Helen bunked with Elizabeth, because Nataly said the girls tossed, and Mrs. Bryan didn't. 218

While Sandy slept Louise and Winona were busy. Louise woke Winona at five, and they heated water, filled the charcoal-iron, and washed and ironed and mended Sandy's underclothes. While Louise darned Sandy's socks, Winona ironed the garments dry. Then they foraged about the store-shed, which was a warm place at that time of year even in the early morning, and found a white dress of Florence's which Winona thought she had remembered bringing.

When found it proved much too large for Sandy, but Louise was still enthusiastic, and took it up with such good will that two of the tucks she put in had to be ripped out again when they came to dress Sandy in it. They polished the small strapped shoes the child had taken off, sewed the button of each on more firmly, and decided that they looked almost new.

Then Winona went back to awaken her own little sister. When she returned to Louise's tent she found her friend had finished giving Sandy another bath. She was just dressing her.

"I don't believe this poor little thing knows what a thorough bath is," she greeted Winona over the child's head.

"Yes, I do, too," said Sandy. "But I had one last night, an' you've been an' given me anuvver now!"

"I think I'll box her hair, too," went on Louise. "It is getting rather common now, but she has so much, and it's so untidy, that it would really be the best thing even if I didn't keep her."

"I wouldn't do her hair till you're sure we're going 219 to keep her," objected Winona. "Her people mightn't like it."

"A dissipated father and a poor little overworked elder sister--Vicky is your sister, isn't she, Sandy?--and a home where they don't even wash or feed her? Poor people haven't time to take care of hair like this. Anyway, they haven't done it, for it was tangled awfully," she finished conclusively.

"But it's so pretty!" protested Winona. "Just look at it, nearly to her waist, and thick and curly, and such a lovely gold color!"

"So much the worse for her health," said Louise as promptly as Red-Riding-Hood's wolf. "Sandy, wouldn't you like your hair cut nice and short, so it wouldn't get tangled any more?"

"An' twousers?" demanded Sandy hopefully. "Gee, zat's gweat!"

"I'll have to stop her using slang," said Louise. "No, dear, not exactly twousers, but--I could get her some overalls, couldn't I, Win?"

"I suppose so," said Winona.

"Then I will," said Louise.

"You're gweat, too," said Sandy, turning around where she sat on Louise's lap, and throwing both little bare arms around her neck and kissing her. Louise kissed her back warmly.

"Isn't she a dear?" she said. "Winnie, will you please hand me the scissors?"

"No," said Winona, "I won't. It's wicked to spoil pretty hair like that." And she walked out of the tent. 220

"I'll det 'em," said Sandy, slipping down and bringing them to Louise from the table at the end of the tent.

"Here's a piece of ribbon to tie it with, if you won't cut it off," said Winona, reappearing with a wide length of blue taffeta.

"No, thank you," said Louise, cutting industriously and very neatly. "It would just be in her eyes all the time. I'm going to cut it straight across her eyebrows, like a little boy's."

"I did it to all my dolls once," said Winona. She sat down, though, and watched Louise till she was done.

Louise had washed the little girl's hair when she gave her the second bath, and when it was even and short enough to suit her she finished dressing the child in her white frock, and set her on the grass outside, to dry in the sunshine. She gave her a picture book to look at to keep her amused. The bobbed locks, thick and curly, fluffed out charmingly in a yellow bush around the sweet little face.

"It's becoming," admitted Winona. "She looks like a cherub, or a choir-boy on a Christmas card. There is the signal for breakfast. You just got her dry in time."

"Breakfast?" said Sandy, brightening.

"Poor little darling!" said Louise, catching and kissing her. "I don't believe she ever had anything to eat before she came here!"

They went to breakfast in state, and Sandy's golden aureole and clean white frock made quite a sensation at the table. They piled things up for her to sit on, and 221 she was put where Mrs. Bryan could reach her, and argue with her easily if she misbehaved. But she acted very well indeed. Her table-manners were good, considering, she talked without the least shyness, and managed to eat a very large breakfast. Louise beamed with pride over the impression her protegee was making.

When breakfast was over, and Sandy turned loose again to play with Puppums and Florence, to whom she had taken a violent fancy, Louise packed a market-basket with everything a starving family might need. Then she found her purse, summoned Winona, and they took the rowboat and went forth, Sandy and Puppums in the bottom of it.

They rowed along the west branch, a narrow stream that doubled at right angles from the branch the camps were on. It was lined with pretty summer cottages for a part of the way, then after that, at the very end, came a part that was filled with poor people who had squatted there. But long before they came to the poorest part Sandy desired to land.

"Here we is!" she said cheerfully, at a prosperous-looking dock about a third of the way up.

"Not here, dearie," said Louise. "It's probably some place where the poor child's been fed," she added aside to Winona.

"We may as well get out, though, mayn't we?" suggested Winona. "Maybe they can tell us where she comes from."

They tied the boat and got out, and walked down a deep lane for a while. Presently they came to a large 222 white house in the middle of a couple of acres of half-yard, half-lawn looking land.

The doors and windows were all wide open, but there was no one to be seen. Sandy walked into the hall with an assured tread, took a long breath, and called at the top of her lungs, "Vicky! Vick-ee!"

The girls stood at the door and waited, ready to apologize for their charge's rudeness whenever somebody might appear. In about five minutes, during which Sandy continued to shout, they heard a light, slow step along the upper hall. Presently a slim, dark, rather pretty little girl of about eleven scuffed down the stairs. She had on a kimono over her nightgown, though it was quite late in the morning.

"That you, Sand?" she called as she came. "Goodness, you're up early!"

"This is Vicky," Sandy explained to the girls over her shoulder. "Vicky! I've had two baths!"

Louise stood, for once, speechless. She hung mechanically to the handle of the basketful of provisions, but she was too surprised to move. It was Winona who finally took courage to come forward and explain.

"I'm Winona Merriam," she said, "and this is my friend, Louise Lane. We are over at Camp Karonya, the Camp Fire, you know. We found this little girl yesterday, and we came over to-day to bring her home. Does she--does she belong here?"

"Why, of course she does," said Vicky. "Thank you for bringing her. She's always trailing off that way, aren't you, Sand? How long you been gone?" 223

"Is she your sister?" asked Louise, who had her breath by this time.

"M'hm," nodded Vicky. "Why--why, Alexandra Mitchell, where's your hair?"

"It got boxed!" exclaimed Sandy gleefully. "Isn't it nice?"

"I'm afraid we'll have to explain about that," said Winona bravely. "Your little sister strayed into a little fishing-trip four of us were having yesterday, very hungry and rather dirty, and without all her clothes on. And from the way she talked we thought she was--well, we washed her and dressed her, and--I'm sorry--shortened her hair, it was so tangled. I'm ever so sorry. I think it will grow----"

Vicky stared a minute at Alexandra, very proud of herself, neat, clean, dressed and bobbed. Then instead of being angry she sat down on the floor, where she was, and burst into a fit of laughter.

"You thought--you thought--oh, my *goodness!*"

"Yes," said Winona. She sat down, too, and finally went off herself. "Yes--we *did!*"

"And you brought food for the hungry family----" Vicky's eye fell on the large basket which Louise still held stiffly before her. "Oh, oh, oh! And Uncle Will's pride, Sandy's hair, that he made a picture of that sold for ever so much money--oh, my goodness *gracious!*"

She and Winona both began to laugh again. Louise didn't. She stood against the wall like a wax statue.

"It certainly is funny," said Vicky at last, mopping 224 her eyes, "but I'm good and glad about Sandy's hair. It was an awful nuisance to take care of, and Uncle Will *would* keep it that way so he could paint pictures of it. Won't you stay and have some breakfast? We have a cook."

"No, thank you," said Louise hurriedly, "we've had our breakfast."

"What an awful noise, children!" said a voice; and a rather ruffled man appeared. He had an absent look, and also gave an impression of not having been to bed all night. He had a paint-brush in his hand.

Vicky and Sandy sprang for him, hanging to him.

"Oh, Uncle Will, this is two Camp Fire girls," said Sandy. "They cutted my hair when I was lost. Ain't it cute?"

"*Oh!*" said Uncle Will, and looked as aghast as Louise had. "How did this accident happen?"

"It wasn't an accident," said Sandy. "Louise boxed my head, an' gived me two baths!"

Uncle Will--so far as the girls learned that was all the name he had--uttered another faint exclamation. Then he dived back into his room as if he wanted to bear the shock alone.

"I'm so sorry!" said Winona, who found she had all the talking to do. "I'm afraid your uncle doesn't like it!"

"Oh, he's only got an artistic temp'rament," said Vicky, as if it were a disease uncles could not help. "I think Sandy's goin' to, too. Do stay to breakfast. We'll have things out o' your basket if you will." 225

"No, thank you," said Winona. "I think Louise is in a hurry to go home. Come over and see us. It isn't far if you have a boat."

"We'll get somebody to bring us," said Vicky. "I'd come now if I was dressed."

"It wouldn't be a bad plan if you dressed a little earlier," said Winona frankly. "Are there just you two?"

"Nope," said Vicky, "there's Lancy, too. He's eight. Uncle Will tries to bring us up, but he don't know how so very well."

"Well, when you come down to camp we can tell you a lot of things if you'd like us to," said Winona.

"Maybe," said Vicky indifferently. "But it's all right this way. You can try telling us, though."

"Well, good-bye," said Louise--it was all she had contributed to the conversation, but she seemed to contribute it gladly.

So they went, still carrying the basket.

"Wait!" called Sandy's voice behind them when they had gone a little way. "I'm goin' back wiv you! You said you'd 'dopted me!"

"But we didn't know your uncle wasn't poor then," said Louise. "We can't take you away from him."

"You 'dopted me," said Sandy doggedly, "an' I'm goin' wiv you--so there!" And she thrust her wet little hand into Louise's and trotted along beside them. "Louise--wasn't there cake in the basket?"

"You have cake at home, dear," said Louise. But she looked as if she felt a little better. After all, even 226 if an orphan didn't need adopting, it was a pleasure to find that she liked it.

"Like you best," insisted Sandy. "Goin' to stay wiv you. They don't care!"

"Oh, let's let her, just for to-day, anyhow!" said Winona. "I don't believe anybody'll mind."

"All right," said Louise rather as if she wanted to. They got into the boat again, and rowed to camp.

"Sandy," asked Louise, "what did you mean by saying your father drank? You haven't any father."

"Well, I did have," said Sandy. "And of sourse he did dwink when there was a him. Evvybody does. Little flowers do. My governess said so."

"Your *governess!*" said Louise. "Is your uncle rich enough for you to have a governess--and you go trailing round in your underwaist and petticoat!"

"When he draws pictures an' sells 'em he is. When he don't he don't. Gimme some cake?"

Sandy was evidently quite calm about her way of living.

"She mayn't need adopting, but she certainly needs reforming," said Louise vigorously.

They were paddling past the Scouts' camp by now. Louise was quite willing to go past softly, but Sandy yelled, for she saw Billy.

"Hello, girls!" he called. "Back already? Got all the papers signed?"

"No, I haven't," said Louise. "And, Billy, if you ask me any more questions, I'll jump over and drown!"



## 227 CHAPTER TWENTY

The Camp Fire might all grin broadly whenever it spoke of Louise's adoption--even more broadly than it had at Winona's cat-collection: but the adoptee herself was quite serious about it. Adopted she was by the Camp Fire in general and Louise in particular, and adopted she meant to stay. She went home once in awhile--there was nobody to worry about her, it seemed, when she stayed away--but as a rule she considered herself a Camp Fire Girl. She was too young to be a Blue Bird, but that didn't make any difference. Finally she was given the official position of third sub-mascot, ranking after Puppums and Hike the Camp Cat. Unofficially, she got better training than she appeared to have had for some time, for she knew that to stay in Camp she had to obey rules. Vicky never did come over. Once in awhile they would return Sandy to her home, just for politeness, but it didn't seem to be specially required of them.

"We ought to have a grand entertainment," declared Marie one day, "and invite all the summer people who bought our things."

"Yes," Louise approved, "and then, perhaps, if we made them happy, they'd buy some more."

"Well, I was thinking of charging for the entertainment," demurred Marie.

"But wouldn't it be piling things up just a wee bit too much?" asked Louise. 228

"Perhaps," admitted Marie.

"What were you thinking of having?" asked Winona.

It was at the end of a weekly Council Fire, and the girls were lying about, as usual, on the hill.

"I was wondering"--from Marie a little doubtfully--"if we could have some tableaux from Maeterlinck, with readings. I could do the readings."

"What's Maeterlinck?" asked Louise cheerfully. "Something good to eat?"

"No, you goose!" instructed Marie. "He wrote the 'Blue Bird,' and--oh, a lot of plays."

"Nice ones?" asked Louise. "Lots of people running around doing exciting things?"

"No," admitted Marie. "Nothing much happens. But it's very elevating."

"I don't feel as if I wanted to be elevated, somehow," said Louise firmly, "and I'm sure those summer people don't; they come here to relax and enjoy themselves, and when they want something really high-brow they go to the movies and see bears and lions eating each other. They can do that right in the place itself."

"I don't believe they'd come to a Maeterlinck show, either, Marie," so said Mrs. Bryan. "We can take him up to read this winter, if the girls want to know more about him. But he isn't exactly the author for a summer entertainment--especially if we want to make money."

"We do," said Marie who had a strictly practical side to her. 229

"Does it have to be an author?" Helen wanted to know.

"It seems to," said Louise.

"I have an idea!" exclaimed Winona, sitting up.

"Is it an author?" asked Louise.

"Yes!" said Winona, "it is!"

"Well?" from everybody.

"Samantha Allen!" cried Winona eagerly. "My plan's this. Have somebody dress like Samantha--you know the pictures--and tell all about herself to begin with. Then we could make a big, wooden frame--we have those boards left from the float--and Samantha could turn over the leaves of the album, and describe the characters in her books one by

one, as they were shown in the frame. We could call it 'Samantha's Picter-Album,' or something like that."

"I saw an entertainment that was something of that sort once," said Adelaide. "But it was just a frame with old-fashioned pictures, like daguerrotypes. There wasn't any Samantha, or any talking. I should think this would be lots better. But would it last a whole evening, and make the Wampoag people think they'd had their money's worth?"

"I think so," said Louise. "And anyway, if it wasn't so very long we could amuse the visitors by showing them over the camp, and telling them all about our customs and habits. Maybe we could do a folk-dance for them afterwards."

"Oh, yes, of course we could!" said Edith, whose specialty it was. "We could give them an Indian 230 dance as easy as anything, and that Russian one I learned before I came. I can teach it to eight of us."

"I know how to dance the minuet," suggested Helen. "How many had it in that Washington's Birthday thing Miss Green's class had last year?"

Five had, it seemed. As a minuet only needs ten performers it was very simple to polish that up. And all of them knew Indian dances already. So a committee was appointed to get up the costumes. The Indian dresses were there already. For the Russian dance Edith thought head-dresses of paper muslin would do and aprons of colored scrim, over white skirts and turned-under, slipped-under-the-skirt middy blouses. For the minuet--well, there was cheese-cloth in red and yellow that Marie had had on her canoe; everyone could powder her hair and contrive a 'kerchief. The pannier draperies could be pinned into place, and broad bodices of Winona's black paper muslin from the canoe-trimming could be cut and pinned into place with very little trouble. Helen and Edith and Adelaide were told off to see about the costuming; Edith, as she had to train the others in dancing, had nothing but supervision to do. Helen and Adelaide did what little actual work was needed.

"The main thing this entertainment needs seems to be pins," said Helen the third day after they had decided to have it. It was a Thursday, and they planned the affair for the next Monday night. "We're nearly out of them."

So eight papers of pins were bought, not to speak 231 of a good deal of white paper muslin. The girls were assigned their different characters in the Album, and each left to her own cleverness in getting up the costume. About midway in the preparations it suddenly dawned on the girls, who had gotten all the Samantha books from the Wampoag library, and had their families send them on the ones they owned, that boys were needed.

So a committee consisting of all the sisters was sent up the lake to borrow Boy Scouts. It wasn't the easiest thing in the world, for boys seem to dislike "dressing up" as much as girls like it; but Mr. Gedney was Camp Karonya's friend, and they went back with all the boys they needed promised them--if they would look after the costumes and not expect the Scouts to rehearse.

Louise was appointed a Committee of Tickets, with Elizabeth to help her. Louise was a born ticket-seller. She loved it. She and Elizabeth put in most of their waking hours exchanging bits of ecru cardboard with small red things on them (meant for Camp Fires) for thirty-five cents. And they did very well. They got permission of all the drug-stores and many other stores, to put up posters, which were camp-made, also, of course. So by the time the fateful night arrived quite a goodly crowd was ferried over to Camp Karonya by the Scouts' canoes.

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At eight precisely the audience, accommodated on long planks which reached from box to box, saw a curtain pulled away from between two trees. Nothing 232 was to be seen in its place but a plump red album standing out against a background which represented every sheet in the camp. They had used Marie's red cheese-cloth after all, instead of Winona's black paper muslin. As for the framework, that was a work of art for which several of the girls were responsible. It had taken all the manual training they knew, and a little bit more--they had had to call Tom Merriam, whose hobby was carpentry, before they got it all right--but the general effect was gorgeous. The audience was given a fair amount of time to appreciate the beauty of the album, which was about eight feet high. Then Marie stepped out. She had been elected to the very responsible part of Samantha because her memory was good, rather than because she looked it. But she had done excellently with what means she had. Two small pillows for a foundation, a pink wrapper with large black spots, sent on from home, an elderly bonnet borrowed from a friendly farmer's wife, a substantial gingham apron, spectacles, a Paisley shawl, and a large palm-leaf fan, completed a get-up that would have disguised Marie Hunter effectually from her own best friend.

When she thought she had waited long enough to give the audience a chance to appreciate her she curtsied, and reaching over, pulled at the album cover with the crook of a green-handled umbrella. The inside page of the album was imitated by a frame with white muslin tightly stretched over it, and an oval hole in the middle for the picture. In the hole

just now was a meek, 233 chin-whiskered face surrounded by a high collar--Mr. Gedney, normally. Samantha pointed to this proudly.

"Brethren and sisteren," began Samantha, after she had introduced herself, "this here is my lawful, though sometimes wayward, pardner Josiah Allen. I was married to him in a brand-new green silk gown, made pollynay, and Mother Jones's parlor, come twenty year ago. Our mutual affection has been a beakin ever since, though I can't deny it has sputtered some once in awhile, and burned purty low, tryin' times like house-cleanin' an' wash-days."

She went on with the famous tale of "How the Bamberses borrowed Josiah," cutting it short when she heard the tiny bell behind the scene tinkle, as a signal that another picture was ready. Then she jerked the cover to with her umbrella-handle, and operated it again. This time the inside leaf had been fastened back with the lid, for this was a full-sized picture. The audience, by this time, was laughing at nearly everything she said, for Marie was a capital mimic, and she had picked out and strung together all the funniest things she could find in the Samantha Allen books.

"This here," announced Samantha, "is my step-children, Thomas Jefferson and Tirzah Ann. They ain't bad children, if I do say it as shouldn't, and I have brung 'em up like they wuz my own."

Winona was Tirzah. She sat stiffly in a high-backed chair (the back was pasteboard, covered with black muslin, cut in a Chippendale sort of way) and she wore a full, flowered gown, with her hair looped over her 234 ears and fastened in the back to a "chignon" with two fat curls hanging from it. They had put Tom with her, with a view to mutual support. He, too, had a preposterous collar (collars may be made by the dozen if you have scissors and patience, and the Camp Fire Girls had both) and a flowered vest. His baggy clothes and a tall hat at his feet completed a picture that was so much like the ones you do see in old albums that the audience began to clap before Marie was through her introduction.

"Woof!" said Tom when he got out of the frame. "Never again for me!" He turned to grin at Billy, who had still to go on. Billy was supposed to be 'Submit Tewksbury's beau, a dashin' city feller,' and he was trying to get an appropriate amount of dash into his mustaches.

"Every time I go up against Camp Karonya," responded Billy sadly, "I have to do something that needs a lot of stiffening. I had to work two hours over that fiend tail of mine, and these whiskers are just as bad."

"It'll be worse when you have real ones," remarked Louise consolingly. She was acting as putter-on-of-finishing-touches. There was a dressing-tent apiece for the girls and boys, and Billy was on the outside of his, trying to arrange the mustache to his liking by means of a small mirror pinned to the canvas.

"At least I won't have to worry about their sticking on," was his reply.

"There," said Louise, "they'll do now."

"Billy and Adelaide wanted!" called Edith. 235

Adelaide, on account of a mournful expression that still appeared at times, had been selected for "Submit Tewksbury," who had a broken heart and was good to one relative after another for thirty years or more. She had been told to look as sad as she possibly could, and she was posed with a medicine bottle and spoon, with which she had just--so Samantha explained--been nursing her relatives. Billy, behind her, looked very cheerful and debonair with his jaunty mustache and a very gaudy shirt which--so he said afterwards--he had bought especially for the occasion, for thirty-nine cents marked down from fifty. It had a large, spotty pattern on it, and it looked *very* festive.

The tableaux went smoothly on. Marie remembered all her lines, the audience appeared to enjoy it all very much, when suddenly in the midst of a speech she remembered something, and halted, secretly referring to the list of pictures which was pinned inside her palm-leaf fan. Widder Doodle, Submit Tewksbury, Elder Minkley, Maggie Snow--yes, they were four past Betsy Bobbet, the crowning glory of the evening, and no Betsy Bobbet had there been! Marie pulled herself together and thought a minute, talking on meanwhile.

"Brethren and sisteren," she said, "I hope you'll excuse me for a minute. My wind's a gittin' low, and my new congress gaiters pinch me some. I'm goin' to ask you to wait a bit, till I fetch me a drink of water."

The audience laughed, and clapped, as it had been doing most of the evening, and Samantha scuttled distractedly 236 behind the scenes, where she clutched the nearest person to her. It happened to be Mrs. Bryan, who was making up one of the boys under a light.

"Where's Betsy Bobbet--I mean Lilian Green?" she asked hurriedly. "It's way past her turn, and she's never been in at

all."

"Oh, my dear, didn't anyone tell you?" said Mrs. Bryan.

"They couldn't," said Marie. "I've been out front all this time."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Mrs. Bryan. "Can't you do without her? She slipped and tore her costume so badly that it wasn't fit to appear in. She could pose, of course, but the tears would show."

"I went right down over a tent-pole," explained Lilian, appearing to speak for herself. She was indeed badly torn, not to speak of the fact that she was limping a little. Her bonnet and veil--a green mosquito-netting veil--were wrecked--and she had managed to muddy herself thoroughly, too.

"You certainly made a thorough job of it!" exclaimed Marie. "But oh, Mrs. Bryan, what shall I do? I've been talking about her all the evening--leading up to her. She's the keystone of the whole performance."

"It would be a case of Hamlet with Hamlet left out without her, then, would it?" queried Mrs. Bryan. "My dear, I don't know what to say. If Lilian were damaged somebody else could supply her place, but we haven't any understudy for Lilian's clothes!" 237

"There's only one thing to do," offered Winona, coming over from a group of girls. "Have her go on anyway, Marie, and make up something to explain why she looks so funny. Explain why she's so torn and crumpled--make a joke of it, so they'll think it was all on purpose."

"Winnie, you're the pride of my life!" vowed Marie. "I'll have to do just that. It will be hard," she added doubtfully.

"Oh, no, it won't," and Winona laughed reassuringly, "you're the cleverest one of us, and if you can't make up some reason why Betsy Bobbet looks mussed, nobody can. Now go on out and do it."

She gave her a little push.

"Ray-of-Light, you're a dear!" Marie said affectionately as she turned and went out. "Put Lilian in the frame just as she is, please," she said. "I think I can manage it."

Lilian laughed a little at the idea of displaying herself to two hundred summer people looking as if she had come out of a subway accident, but she got into position like the good-natured girl she was, and Marie heard the little bell and began to make her impromptu explanation.

"My friend, Betsy Bobbet, she's a considerable kind of a curis person," she said. "She's sorter sentimental, an' sometimes she's too impulsive. Now, just before she had this daguerrotype took that I'm goin' to show you, she was writin' a pome to the Muse. This is how it went: 238

"Muse of Poetry  
I would do much for thee  
And I am full of tears  
Because I have been writin' so many years  
And still unappreciated I be--

"Betsy can write pomes like that any time," explained Marie, and the audience giggled. "But I always tell Betsy," Marie went on, "that walkin' cross-lots ain't any place to compose poetry to Muses. Well, she was walkin' 'cross-lots in a brown study an' a red-striped morey waist, speakin' this out loud as she went. An' she got to gesturin' before she thought. An' Farmer Peedick, him that married Jane Ann Allen, had jest let his best bull out in the field. An' whether it was the red morey waist or the pome Betsy never did know, but she thinks it was the pome. She says she thinks the bull, not bein' used to fust-class poetry, was excited. So he just up an' ran after her. Well, she stopped recitin', an' ran, too. She jest got over the barb-wire fence in time. But I tell you, Betsy Bobbet is a wonderful woman! When she was safe she fixed that bull with her eye (it was a poet's eye, she says to me), an' recited the remainder of that ode to him. An', ladies an' gentlemen, you mayn't believe it, but that bull was cowed! Yes, sir. He looked at her, Betsy says to me, as if he was sayin' 'I can't stand that!' an' he ran. Yes, sir, he just ran!"

She pulled aside the frame, and there smirked Betsy, very stiff and proper, with her bonnet and veil still a wreck and her red morey waist very much askew, and with a jagged rent down the front of her 239 skirt. But her corkscrew curls twisted gracefully down either side of her face, her eyes were rolled up, and her mitted hand clutched a roll of paper.

The audience howled.

Marie closed the cover, bowed, and went on to the end of the pictures.

The dances--the Indian dance, the minuet and the Russian dance--were beautiful and everyone applauded them, though they liked the Indian dance best. When they had finished some of the guests, to Louise's great delight, demanded Camp Fire work, and bought it, too. After that the girls distributed coffee and sandwiches free, and then the Scouts took the audience, in relays, up the river to Wampoag.

Before they went somebody said to Marie:

"My dear, you were splendid. I'm going to give that entertainment for our church this winter, and write to you for help. But the most convincing and amusing picture of the lot was 'Betsy Bobbet.' Do tell me how you ever managed to make the thing so life-like?"

But Marie merely looked modest.

"We did the best we could," she said. "It was quite simple, after all."

## 240 CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The next time Billy and Tom and Winona and Louise went off in Billy's canoe for the day, they did not take Sandy. She happened to be making one of her brief visits home. They took, instead, a shot-gun apiece (that is, the boys did), a book apiece (that was for the girls), a bagful of socks from the Scouts' mending-basket, and the usual amount of lunch.

"We look like an Italian moving," Tom observed critically, looking over their joint baggage. "Three fishing-rods, two baskets, two paddles, two guns, two sunbonnets. Whew! Louise, I'll trade with you."

"It isn't much at all," said Louise indignantly. "I could carry my share, and yours, too, if I had to."

"You may," he returned promptly. "Here's my rifle. It won't go off unless you hit the trigger by accident."

"Heap big chief!" said she, not offering to take it. "If I'd remembered how you hated carrying innocent little things like this around with you"--she pointed to the imposing pile of baskets, books and work in the bottom of the canoe--"I'd have telephoned for an expressman."

"Have you a telephone?" asked Tom. "When did you put it in, and what did you tie it to?"

"No," said Louise, "but we could have borrowed yours."

The Scouts had just finished installing a telephone 241 from Wampoag to their headquarters. They had done nearly everything themselves in the way of connecting and so forth. They were very proud of it, and the Camp Fire girls were wildly envious, for all *they* had was a system of baking-powder-box-and-wire telephone, worked out from the American Girl's Handy Book by two young geniuses. It was all right as far as it went, but naturally it wouldn't connect them with the telephones at home, or at Wampoag.

"Why, of course you could," consented Tom. "In fact, you can. Shall I paddle you that way?"

"You needn't mind," she smiled. "Do look at Winona!"

Winona had one of Marie's books, and she was sitting on the bottom reading it, forgetful of the world.

"What does this mean, Billy?" as she looked up suddenly. "Marie has a note here in pencil 'But Raleigh was not exclusively Elizabethan!' and two exclamation points after it."

"I don't know," Billy answered frankly. "I don't see why Marie wants to worry about it."

"Raleigh was Gothic with Queen Anne chimneys," interrupted Tom. "If you want information just come to me, little one. Here, Winnie, put down that book. It looks too full of useful information for a nice day like this. Remember, this is a pleasure exertion."

"All right," and Winona laid down the book. "Only I do wish I knew as much as Marie does."

"And yet she never seems to study hard," remarked Louise, to whom lessons were a painful grind. "I 242 believe she's like Billy Wiggs of the Cabbage-Patch--she 'inherited her education from her paw!'"

"She could!" put in Tom mournfully. "Professor Hunter has enough and too much. Just wait till you get under him, Louise!"

"Oh, I can wait. I'm in no hurry at all. He's awfully nice out of school hours, but----"

"But why talk about school in vacation?" broke in Billy impatiently. "Isn't it a lovely day?"

The girls were curled on the bottom of the canoe, in the middle, and the boys were paddling at the ends. The morning breeze, cool and fresh, struck their faces, whipping Louise's red hair about her face in little curls, and blowing Winona's blue tie straight back over her shoulder in the sunshine.

"This is something like living!" Tom declared, spitting the water with his paddle because he was so happy. "Pass me about three bananas, will you, whoever's nearest the lunch? I feel hungry."

"You aren't," said Louise swiftly. "You just want those bananas because you know they're there. Have some poetry

instead. I brought a bookful."

"Poetry!" snorted Tom, as she hoped he would.

"Caesar! There's a snipe!" cried Billy, dropping his paddle, reaching for a rifle, and taking hasty aim.

"Never touched it," mocked Tom as the report died, and the snipe appeared not to have done so at all.

"How do you come to be carrying all these shooting-irons around?" asked Louise suspiciously. "I thought Mr. Gedney was pretty strict about it." 243

"Special permission," explained Tom. "We've both always known how to shoot, and old Billy here is supposed to be the most careful thing that ever was."

"That wasn't a snipe," said Billy disgustedly. "That was a mosquito, a nice tame old Jersey mosquito. I always heard they grew to that size, but I never believed it before."

"Don't cast any asparagus," said Louise. "The advertisements say there are no mosquitoes here."

Billy eyed the now almost gone snipe.

"Well, he may have been a plain fly," he conceded.... "Let's go on hunting. Perhaps we'll find a real snipe next time."

They paddled along lazily for the next three-quarters of an hour, talking a little now and then. For the most part, though, they went on in silence, except when Louise giggled over "Fables in Slang," which she had pulled out of her blouse-pocket, or when someone saw what might be game, or especially good scenery. They went, presently, down an arm of the river that was scarcely more than a creek, and stopped there till afternoon for rest and refreshment. It seemed a charming spot, and almost deserted. Only in the distance one red-roofed farmhouse could be seen, adding to the picturesqueness of the landscape.

There were three small sandwiches left, and the girls, with the aid of paper and pencil, had just worked it out that each person present was entitled to three-quarters of a sandwich. They were trying to decide who should get the three quarters that were cut out of 244 the three sandwiches--it was more a point of honor than necessity, for nobody much wanted any of them--when there was a subdued howl from Tom, who had been lying on his back in the canoe, gazing up at the sky.

Six stately geese were flying in an arrow-shape across the creek, above the canoe. Both boys fired.

"Oh, what a shame to kill them!" mourned Winona; but Tom said hurriedly again that they had special permission from Mr. Gedney, and sat up to see if he had done anything.

"We each got one!" said Billy in a tense whisper. "They've dropped on the farther shore--there by the farmhouse!"

The boys pushed the canoe up close and sprang out. They were dashing excitedly across country after their prey. Suddenly the waiting girls heard wild howls, and the tall, angry form of a wild-eyed man in overalls suddenly appeared from nowhere with a pitchfork.

"Oh, he's chasing the boys!" exclaimed Winona.

"He certainly is!" seconded Louise, and began to giggle. "Listen to him!"

It was really impossible to do anything else.

"My geese! My prize geese!" shouted the overalled man, adding what he thought of Tom's and Billy's intelligence. "My pedigreed geese, you young idiots! I'll teach you!"

"You ought to have made 'em wear their pedigrees around their necks," Tom shouted back at the man.

"Oh, can they get away?" cried Louise. "Look!"

And Winona, looking, saw that their way back to 245 the canoe was cut off by a dog--the traditional farmer's dog of the comic papers. He was stationed on the bank, eying the canoe and the girls in it in a very threatening way, and most plainly only waiting till the boys came back to bite them.

Winona gave the canoe a determined push which landed it in midstream, and both girls began to paddle back by the way they had come, Winona because she had a plan, Louise because she was following Winona.

"We'll meet them around this point, on the other side," she explained to Louise. "I saw a glimpse of water on the other side, and I think the point of land the farm is on is like a peninsula."

Sure enough, they discovered the criminals crouched romantically behind a clump of trees at the other side of the point of land. They were so well hidden that the girls would never have seen them if Billy had not stealthily waved a red handkerchief which he always carried for wigwagging. The girls paddled up as softly as they could, and the boys crawled out and waded to the canoe, crouching low. Nobody dared say anything till the canoe and its crew was well out and downstream again, far from farmers with dogs and pitchforks and no desire to listen to explanations.

"And we never even got those geese!" mourned Tom.

"Got those geese!" said Louise severely. "You oughtn't to want to get pedigreed geese that belonged to a farmer--especially a farmer with that kind of a disposition." 246

"He hasn't any business to let tame geese go prowling around the country that way," growled Billy, "the first day a fellow has leave to go shooting food for the Scouts at home! How were we to know they had a coat-of-arms and a family tree? They ought to have been kept at home, in their ancestral barnyard."

"And we never even got the confounded things!" lamented Tom again. "And we might just as well have, too, because we'll have to go up and pay for them, of course, when Mr. Overalls has calmed down enough not to bite us on sight. They may be worth a thousand dollars apiece, for all we know. We were the pedigreed geese, I think!"

"Never mind," said Louise soothingly, "be glad Father Goose didn't get you, instead of sorry you didn't get his pets. They probably would have been tough, anyway."

"And we can fish," suggested Winona. "Nobody's going to jump out of the river and tell us that these are his pedigreed perch."

"The game-warden may, if the river's been stocked lately," said Billy.

"It hasn't," asserted Tom. "Don't you remember? We found out all about that before any of us came up here last year. All these fish are old enough to die. Pass me the bait, please, Winnie."

"Here you are," said Winona.

She baited a line for herself, dropped it in, and everyone else did the same thing. After that nobody said anything for quite a little while, unless an occasional 247 "Confound those geese!" from Tom could count as conversation.

"Got something!" announced Louise at length, jerking in her line.

"What is it?" asked Tom with interest.

"Feels like a perch--or a trout," said Louise pulling in her line rapidly.

"It doesn't *look* like one," said Winona.

"M'm, not exactly," said her brother. "You ought to be interested in it, though, Win--it's a catfish."

"You can eat catfish," said Louise, quite calmly. "In fact, I believe they're considered very good eating. I don't know but I'd rather have them than trout."

"Especially if you can't get the trout," added Tom.

"If you can't get what you want, you must want what you can get." So she baited her line again.

"Well, what is it this time?" inquired Tom next time she pulled her line in. The rest had had fair luck.

"Probably another pussy-fish," said Louise resignedly. But this time it was a real perch, and after that it was a sunfish, and then two more catfish. And presently there was enough for supper, and by the time they got back they knew it would be supper-getting time. Winona was cooking supper that week. So they put the fish in the empty lunch-basket



and paddled for home. Louise took Billy's paddle, and Billy trolled all the way. He didn't get anything, but he enjoyed himself.

"Who's that on the dock?" asked Tom as they neared the Camp Karonya landing. "Are they waiting for us?" 248

"Tom's afraid the farmer with the ducks has come around the other way," said Louise. "No, Tommy, my dear, that's only Mr. Sloane, who is a sort of unofficial uncle to Camp Karonya. We're supposed to have rented that dock from him, but he comes there and fishes just as much as if we hadn't."

"Sort of a fourth sub-mascot?" said Billy. "Yes, I remember--the old man who helped you out about the scows when you were building the float."

"He's the one," said Winona. "He's fishing."

"And there's Puppums, too," said Louise. "Oh, the dear old doggie! He's come down to the dock to wait for you, Winnie!"

"So he has," agreed Winona. "I wonder if he's been there long."

Puppums liked canoeing very much, and when he thought Winona ought to have taken him and hadn't, he would go down to the dock, trailing her by scent, and sit there hours and hours--merely for the sake of looking reproachfully at her when she did get in, it was thought. Winona always hugged him, and apologized, and took him for a row if possible, and he knew it.

When he caught sight of the canoe (like most dogs, he was short-sighted) he began to bark excitedly and run up and down the dock, and jump wildly about. He did everything but swim out to the canoe. Puppums hated water--which gave rise to a theory that there was a little pug in his ancestry.

Mr. Sloane, too, rose as the canoe came near the landing-place. He did not jump up and down, because 249 he had not been waiting for the canoeing party. He had evidently taken their return as a signal that it was time he went home himself, for he was collecting his rod and bait-can, and his coat, and the other things he had strewn about the dock. Puppums still careered wildly around and around. As Winona stepped ashore his excitement grew so intense that he ran full tilt into Mr. Sloane, who was bending over picking something up, and nearly knocked him over.

"W-u-ugh!" said Mr. Sloane, and began to hunt frantically about the dock.

And as the boys and girls gained the shore it became painfully evident that the little dog had jarred out the old gentleman's false teeth.

Mr. Sloane had never made any secret of the fact that he wore "bought teeth"--indeed, he had told Winona and Adelaide, who were his especial favorites, just where he got them and how much they cost, and where others like them could be gotten. But still, when your friend's teeth are knocked out all at once by your family dog, well, you *do* feel a little embarrassment. With one accord the four looked in the other direction, as Mr. Sloane, with a "Drat that pup!" continued to hunt for his teeth. The boys fussed with the canoe, and Winona and Louise began to hunt for a nonexistent something in the box they used for a locker.

But Puppums was going to be polite at all costs. He trotted over, his tail wagging wildly at the prospect of being able to do something for his mistress, picked up the teeth, and carried them proudly to Winona! 250

"Oh, Puppums--you *naughty* dog!" she said, trying to take the teeth away from him as unostentatiously as possible.

But Puppums, realizing from her voice that something was wrong, looked up at her depreciatingly, wagged his tail again, suddenly put his tail between his legs and started for the camp!

It was no use to try to ignore things any longer.

"Oh, Mr. Sloane," Winona cried. "I'm so sorry! He's a bad dog. I'll go straight after him and get them."

"Now, never mind," said Mr. Sloane, kindly if rather indistinctly. He began to laugh. "That dog o' yours certainly is a rip-snorter!" he said. "Knock a man down an' carry off his teeth!"

By this time the boys had stopped trying not to laugh, and were howling in unison in the background. And little

Frances, Adelaide's sister, came up with a nice birch-bark box. She handed it to Mr. Sloane, dropped a pretty courtesy, and ran. And so did the others. The only unembarrassed members of the party were Puppums, who wasn't there, to be Irish, and Mr. Sloane himself.

"Talk about banner days!" sighed Louise. "I was the only one of us that didn't get into trouble----"

"Louise!" called somebody, from outside the tent where Louise was washing and getting ready for supper. "Did you know that you left the store-shed door open this morning when you came in for supplies, and somebody's carried off every bit of bacon!"

## 251 CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

And in the opulent days which followed the winning of the carnival prizes, and the selling of lovely amounts of Camp Fire goods, Camp Karonya decided that it ought to own a phonograph. The treasury, which was a suitcase under Helen's bed, had money in it, and the girls badly needed something to dance by. To be sure, the camp boasted a mandolin, two guitars, a mouth-organ and a banjo, to say nothing of Mrs. Bryan's Iroquois drum. But all these had to be worked by hand, and the orchestra, after performing for several long evenings while their friends practised folk-dances with abandon, struck.

"We want to get a chance at the folk-dances, too," they remonstrated, very reasonably. Indeed, Louise got up and made a moving speech, alluding to her pressing need of folk-dances, and her slender chance of being able to do them while she played her instrument.

"Here I am," she said pathetically, "twice as plump as anybody else in camp. I need folk-dances more than anybody here does. And I've spent this whole blessed evening plunking a banjo while other people got thin, people that were thin already! It may be good for my moral character, but, girls"--Louise's voice dropped tragically--"it's *ruining* yours!"

They all agreed that something should be done.

Mrs. Bryan was entirely willing to go on pounding her Indian drum indefinitely, but the girls did not think 252 it would be good for their moral characters to let her, either. So they held a business meeting on the spot, which happened to be the large level place they used for dancing ground; and decided to buy a phonograph.

"I think we have catalogues of them at home," said Dorothy Gray. "Shall I write and have them sent on?"

The girls considered that for awhile, but they finally decided not to. Everyone wanted a voice in choosing the phonograph, or at least in deciding on what kind of a phonograph they were to have.

"But we don't want to pay the full price for it," said Helen wisely. "What we ought to do is to advertise in the *Press* in the village. It's the country paper. Look at the market Win created for kittens----"

But here Winona sprang for her, and they rolled over on the leaves, and the meeting ended in a frolic.

However, they all liked Helen's idea, and two Blue Birds were sent off to the *Press* with an advertisement for a second-hand phonograph or victrola in good condition. Next day two other Blue Birds went after the answers. There were three.

One offered a fine music-box in good condition, which had never been used since the owner's wife died twenty years ago. He lived on the Northtown Pike (which nobody present had ever heard of), about seventeen miles from the village. The music-box played six tunes and was an heirloom, having belonged to his mother, but the farmer on the Northtown Pike would part with it for twenty-five dollars for he wanted another Holstein cow and this would pay for part of her.  
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"Horrid old thing!" said Winona when Marie was done reading the answers aloud. "If it's an heirloom he hasn't any business parting with it to buy a section of any kind of cow--or even a whole one."

"Well, Marie, go on to the next," said Mrs. Bryan. But the next was even more hopeless. What this man had was, from his description, a very cheap phonograph which was almost as old as the farmer's music-box; but he, too, thought he would like to have twenty-five dollars for it.

"He doubtless wants to buy a section of cow, too," suggested Mrs. Bryan.

"Maybe they're buying her together," said Louise brilliantly; and Marie read the last letter. This was the only one at all promising. The writer, who was a woman with a good handwriting and correct spelling, said that she had a two-year-old victrola in good condition, and that she would gladly sell it for twenty-five dollars, because she was going to be given a new one.

"That sounds better," said Mrs. Bryan. "I would advise a committee of you to go and look it over."

"But how badly they all want twenty-five dollars!" groaned Marie. "Do you notice it? They all ask for exactly the same amount."

"Probably buying the cow on shares," repeated Louise.

"I vote we make Louise one of the committee to see the two-year-old victrola," said Winona. "She has business instinct, and the rest of us haven't such a lot."

"What's more to the point, I also have a victrola 254 at home, or Dad has," said Louise, "and I know what it ought to be like to be good."

So it was moved and seconded that Louise, Winona and Helen be appointed a committee of three to investigate the victrola.

As early as they could in the afternoon after they had received their replies they started out. It was a gorgeous day, not too warm for comfort, and they chased each other about the road as if they were kittens, instead of responsible Camp Fire Girls out on a very business-like errand. After they had gone about a mile, which led them nearly to the village, it occurred to some brilliant person that it might be a good plan to ask somebody how to get to the address of the woman with the two-year-old victrola. It was The Willows, Lowlane, near Gray's Road, and so far as the girls knew that might have been nearly anywhere. So they did ask at the post-office, where they had quite made friends with the old postmaster.

"It's three miles down the pike," said he. "Strike off on the left to Gray's Road--you'll see a signpost, I guess--and then turn down the first little lane you come to. They call it Lowlane now, the folks that own the house, but it was never anything but Low's Lane till they came there."

"The first little lane we come to?" repeated Winona.

The postmaster looked thoughtful. "Now, I don't want to be too sure," he said. "The first, or maybe the second. Elmer, do you recollect whether Low's 255 Lane is the first or second turning on the Gray's Road way?"

"Second," said Elmer the clerk readily.

"There now!" said the postmaster. "I might a' told you wrong. I certainly had it fixed in my mind that it was the first."

"Thank you," said the girls. "It won't be hard to find."

It seemed, indeed, plain enough sailing, and the girls went on. The road was bordered with trees, and there were flowers they wanted to pick, and occasionally rabbits for Puppums to chase. He was not a swift enough runner to ever catch any of the rabbits he ran after, and the rabbits did not seem to mind, so Winona let him go on chasing.

"We've gone quite three miles, I know," said Louise dismally when they had been walking some time. "And there's no Lowlane--not even any Gray's Road." Louise had trained a good deal since she had been in camp, but she still felt long walks more than the other two did, who were slim. "I 'don't believe there's no sich animal' as Mrs. Martin, or a victrola. There aren't any victrolas or any lanes, high or low, on earth. Woof--I'm tired!"

She fanned herself with her handkerchief, and the dog tried to jump at it, under the impression that she was playing a game with him.

"It does seem a long way," said Helen sympathetically, "but there is a Gray's Road, for I'm sure I see a signpost a little ahead of us." 256

"It's probably one of those automobile directions that says 'Three miles back to the village--seventeen miles forward to Jonesville. Use Smith's Lubricating Oil and Robinson Tires!'" and Louise shrugged her shoulders.

Nevertheless, when they came up to the signpost, although it did advise automobiles about several kinds of supplies they ought to have, it also said that this was Gray's Road. They turned as they had been told, and went down it, in search of their second landmark, Low's Lane. This, unfortunately, wasn't in sight. "Let's ask," said Winona as they passed a little old house by the side of the road, and steered the others up the path that led to the porch. It was a ramshackle, unpainted packing-box of a place, with an old, old lady, heavily shawled, curled up in a rocker, for inhabitant. Helen was pushed forward to speak to her. "Can you tell us if we are near Low's Lane?" she asked, politely.

"Hey?" said the old lady. "I'm a little deaf."

Helen said it over again as loudly as she could.

"Rain?" said the old lady. "No, no--it ain't goin' to rain!"

"Low's Lane!" screamed Helen.

"What?" said the old lady.

"Ask her about the victrola," suggested Winona. "Sometimes deaf people can hear one word when they can't another. Perhaps she'd know by that where we wanted to go."

"We want a place where they're selling a victrola!" shouted Helen. 257

This time the old lady seemed to hear.

"Victrola, hey? You go right on a piece till you turn to your left. It's the first house."

"Thank you," yelled Helen.

They were offered, and took, drinks of water, and went on again.

"I think one of you might have asked some of the questions," said Helen indignantly.

"I'll ask one now!" defied Louise. "Far be it from me not to do my duty." She turned and ran back to where the old dame still rocked on her porch.

"Is it a good victrola?" she shouted.

The old lady shook her head.

"I wouldn't go so far's to say *that*," she answered. "Smart, though--awful smart and clever!"

Louise ran back to the others without asking any more questions.

"She says the talking machine isn't good, but awful smart and clever," she panted. "What *do* you suppose she means?"

"I can't imagine," said Helen. "Anyway, we know how to get there."

The first lane, sure enough, led to a house, but there seemed to be no willows anywhere about it. Still houses often have names that have nothing to do with the facts, so the girls pressed on. The place had a vaguely familiar look to Winona and Louise.

"I'm sure I've come here before, by another way," said Winona.

"I haven't," said Helen. "You must have come 258 by water. I think the river's somewhere back of us. If you ask me, I think one way's enough to come."

They lined up before the door and rang. But the bell, they discovered finally, was badly out of order. A "please knock" sign was blowing about the porch, they discovered still a little later. They knocked vigorously, and the door was finally unfastened by a draggled little girl of about eleven.

"Why--why, how do you do, Vicky!" said Louise in surprise. "Why, of course, Helen, this is Sandy's house. Only this isn't the same door, is it, that we came in by last time, Vicky?"

Vicky, who was as tousled as usual, shook her head.

"What's the matter?" she asked stolidly. "Has Sandy been naughty?"

"No, indeed," said Louise, "she's as good as gold. Can't we come in?" for Vicky didn't seem to feel specially hospitable--she was holding the door on a crack, and was not her usual sunny self. "Sandy's around here somewhere--at least she's not in camp."

"Oh, yes," she said, and opened it wider. The girls filed in and sat down in the square hall, which was as littered as usual with clothes and paper bags and everything else that places are usually littered with.

"Look at that hole!" whispered Louise, forgetting her politeness as Vicky stood near them, not intending, evidently, to sit down and entertain them if she could help it. "There's more hole than stocking!"

It was quite true, but unfortunately Vicky had sharp ears. 259

"They're my own stockings," she said crossly, "and I like 'em with holes in."

"Oh, all right!" said Louise dryly. "Only they aren't usually worn that way."

"Can we speak to your uncle?" interposed Helen, for the air was becoming stormy.

"Isn't home," announced Vicky. "He had a cross fit and went out walking."

"Is anybody home?" asked Winona. "We came on business."

"You can do it with me, whatever it is," said Vicky, sitting down with the torn-stockinged leg under her.

Helen plunged straight into the business at hand.

"The old lady down the road said that this was the house where they had a victrola----" she started to say--and stopped in dismay over the effect of her words; Vicky flew into a temper and began to cry.

"I want you to go away from here--coming to make fun of me!" she sobbed, stamping her foot at them. Before they could answer she ran out of the room, leaving them staring at each other in surprise.

"Well, what on earth?" Winona slowly ejaculated.

"Goodness only knows," said Louise. "Anyway, I seem to feel that she doesn't want to sell it to us."

"Well, no," assented Helen, and the three of them thoughtfully and slowly let themselves out at the door they had come in by.

They had gone only a little way back when they heard flying feet behind them.

"Wait a minute," panted Vicky, catching up to 260 them. "I guess--perhaps--I'd better explain. I'm sorry I got mad. But--but my *name's* Victrola!" She flushed painfully. Evidently it was hard for her to tell. "I thought you were just making fun of me, but I thought about it, and I guess you weren't. I know the place you want--it's a little further, up the next lane."

She started to run back, but Winona caught her hand and held her.

"Why, you poor dear!" she said. "I don't see why you mind. It's a very pretty name. But we weren't trying to make fun of you. We really want to buy a phonograph for the camp."

"They laugh at me--everybody does," faltered Vicky. "They were this morning--the boys down by the landing. That's why I was so cross. They pretend to wind me up, and--and I *hate* it!"

"So would I," comforted Louise. "But you mustn't mind, Vicky. All my life the boys have called me 'Carrots,' and 'Reddy,' and things like that. There's no use caring. Look here, honey, I'll tell you what to do. See if you haven't got a middle name you can use, or even one you ought to have had. Ask your uncle if there wasn't a middle name somebody almost gave you once, and if there was use it."

"I wonder if I could!" said Vicky, brightening. She reached down and pulled up one of her stockings, as if the prospect of a better name made her want to be tidy.

"Anyhow it's a pretty name," said Louise cheerfully. "I wouldn't worry about it." 261

"Yes, you would," said Vicky, as she turned back. "There down this lane's the place you can get--it."

It was Louise's turn to detain her this time.

"Vicky! Vicky!" she called. "Won't you and Sandy come down to Camp Karonya and stay overnight, to-morrow night? We're going to do some stunts--just to celebrate. The Scouts are coming over, and one or two of our pet particular friends."

"I don't know the way," said Vicky.

"Sandy does," said Louise and Winona together.

"Thank you," said Vicky sedately. "We'll come. And--please don't tell the others my name. I'll have the real one thought out by that time."

"Of course we won't," they promised.

"It *was* mean to name her that," Helen declared as they went down the lane.

"Maybe it was before there were machine victrolas, and her mother just thought it was pretty," suggested Louise. "The other children have fancy names, too; Alexandra and Lance. Remember Vicky told us there was a boy named Lancelot, the day we went up?"

"To return your orphan?" said Winona. "Oh, yes--we all remember. Never mind, Ishkoodah dear, perhaps next time you'll find a real one."

"Wouldn't it be fine if Camp Karonya *could* look after some little girl--one of the Children's Aid children, for instance?" said Helen thoughtfully.

"It would take a good deal of money," spoke practical Louise, "if we didn't one of us have it in the family." 262

"Not such a lot," said Winona. "Oh, it would be lovely! A nice little orphan with blue eyes and curly hair, and we'd name her ourselves----"

"We'd call her Gramophone!" suggested Louise; and, tired as they were, they all began to laugh. But by this time they were nearly at the house the machine's namesake had directed them to, and it was the right one.

The owner had a fairly good victrola and six double-faced records, and she finally consented to let it go for twenty dollars. The girls paid down the money on the spot, and constructed a carrier for it out of two pieces of board which the machine's owner threw in.

There were no adventures whatever connected with this end of the happening. Helen took the front end and Louise the back, and Winona steadied it. Then they set it down, after they had walked awhile, and changed places. It seemed rather a long way home, and they were exceedingly glad when they reached camp--that was all. Their sympathetic comrades attended to their routine duties for them, and all the adventurers had to do was to lie on the grass and tell about their travels--everything, that is, but Victrola's name and her grief over it.

After supper the whole camp assembled to enjoy the machine, and danced to everything on its disc, even the sextette from Lucia, given as a vocal selection. But Louise did not do any folk-dances that night. She was so tired that she curled up on a soft spot and fed the machine till it was time to go to bed.

## 263 CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

"Did you dye that old petticoat and underwaist pink?" demanded Winona, sticking her head into Marie's tent.

"Yes, I did," said Marie promptly, "and it's starched, and ironed with the charcoal-iron."

"And did Adelaide borrow her brother's bathrobe for Louise?"

"No, she didn't, but I did—at least, I sent Frances over for it," said Marie. "It's here, and safe."

"And did Louise sew the hood on it?"

"She did," said Marie resignedly. "Every single property for 'Gentle Alice Brown' and the 'Oysterman' is in a mound in the dressing-tent. Go look, for goodness' sake, or you'll have nervous prostration."

Winona, property-woman and general manager of the performance, pulled back her head with a sigh of relief, and went to find the girl who had promised to straighten out the fishing-tackle necessary to the *Ballad of the Oysterman*--for they were to present that classic of Holmes's in a very few hours.

The performance was to be at eight, and it was a strictly complimentary one. The Scouts were invited, and various special friends from Wampoag, most of them made over dealings in Camp merchandise. A committee had been appointed to see about illuminations, and another to attend to the refreshments. They were amassing honor beads by doing it. Marie's 264 Blue Birds were busy everywhere. Camp Karonya was dazzlingly clean, and everyone was getting out the one dress-up frock she had brought along, and giving it attention. There was to be an exhibit, also, as the flaring posters Helen had prepared said, of "potteries, embroideries, jellies, hand-carvings, pickles and other objects." It had been going to be "other objects of art," but Winona pointed out that jellies and pickles *weren't*, no matter what the rest might be. So the poster stopped abruptly at "objects," and the space was filled up by a life-like portrait of a jelly-glass.

Camp Karonya took a very brief meal of bread and milk and cookies, and the dish-washers hurried through their tasks. For eight o'clock has a way of coming long before you expect it. About seven-thirty the paddles and oars and motor-boats of the audience began to be heard, and the reception committee scurried down to the dock to meet their guests. First came their friends the Scouts from down the river, about thirty strong. After them, in little groups, came the summer people, including Billy's Aunt Lydia, who never missed a Camp Fire function if she could help it.

The audience was seated, as usual, on planks laid from box to box and nailed. They did not have to sit there long. After a great deal of giggling and rustling behind the big green curtain that had been made of sacks, pieced together and dyed, Winona came out to announce the beginning of the entertainment.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she commenced, "to-night we are going to have, beside several musical selections, 265 some moving pictures with explanatory recitations--some *very* moving pictures. After the opening song we will have the first one, 'Gentle Alice Brown.'"

The audience applauded, and then the girls sang a Camp Fire song in chorus. After that Louise and Edith played a conscientious mandolin-banjo duet. Then Marie, who was the reader of the evening, came out with a copy of Gilbert's *Bab Ballads* and very slowly began to read "Gentle Alice Brown."

At the first line the curtain was pulled back, revealing Winona alone against a sheet background. She was in an 1860 costume made from an old, full petticoat and tight underwaist, dyed pink, and helped out with small puffed sleeves and a sash. Her curls were bound with a wreath of artificial roses from the ten-cent store, slightly over one ear. She sat on a chair with her head on her hand, and she was looking mournfully over the chair-back. Marie began,

It was a robber's daughter, and her name was Alice Brown,  
Her father was the terror of a small Italian town;  
Her mother was a foolish, weak, but amiable old thing,  
But it isn't of her parents that I'm going for to sing.

As Marie went on, across the stage galloped ferociously Helen, who had been given the role of Robber Brown because she was one of the tallest of the girls. A red flannel shirt of Tom Merriam's, topped by a fishing hat and black mustachio, were most convincing. Her short kilt, which gave her rather the look of a Greek than an Italian bandit, was



met by a pair of fishing-boots, and she wore three carving-knives and a 266 cartridge belt. She strode ferociously across the stage, looking neither to right nor left.

Edith Hillis, trotting meekly behind her as Mrs. Brown, wore a baggy old long skirt, a bandanna tied around her waist, one around her neck and another on her head. She only had one carving-knife. But the lovely Alice did not deign to look at her parents. She gazed sadly out over the audience, while Marie went on to tell how--

As Alice was sitting at her window-sill one day  
A beautiful young gentleman he chanced to pass that way,  
A sorter at the Custom-house, it was his daily road--  
(The Custom-house was fifteen minutes walk from her abode).

At this point the hero crossed the stage dashingly, with a cane under his arm. It was Adelaide, in a plaid cap, a waxed mustache, and a very precise duster which reached her heels. A pipe (she said afterwards it had a dreadful taste) stuck from one corner of her mouth.

Gentle Alice sighed deeply, and so did her lover, who became aware of her presence with a tragic start. He halted, waved to her, sighed with his hand on his heart, and looked altogether very lovelorn. Gentle Alice did not notice him at first, but she gradually seemed to yield, and finally languished softly at him--and winked. So did he. Then he kissed his hands at her and went off reluctantly to work, while Alice wiped away her tears with a large bandanna such as her parents had worn. (They were the historic bandannas which had served Winona and Louise so well on their peddling trip.) 267

The ballad went on to relate how presently Alice's conscience bothered her. So she asked the Brown's family confessor about it,

The priest by whom their little crimes were carefully assessed.

Here Louise appeared, in the brown bathrobe, with its hood pulled up over her head, and sandals on. Alice threw herself at his feet, and waved her hands in grief.

"Oh, father," Gentle Alice said, "'Twould grieve you, would it not,  
To find that I have been a most disreputable lot?"

Louise assumed a benign expression and listened while Alice confessed her sins. Marie stopped, while Winona herself spoke:

I assisted dear mamma in cutting up a little lad,  
I helped papa to steal a little kiddy from its dad--  
I planned a little burglary and forged a little check  
And slew a little baby for the coral on its neck!

But Father Brown seemed inclined to be forgiving, and with a few remarks, ended,

We mustn't be too hard upon these little girlish tricks--  
Let's see--five crimes at half a crown--exactly twelve and six.

Alice thanked him in a few grateful couplets, and pulled out another bandanna with money tied up in it from which she paid him. The ballad went on to relate how Alice tremblingly confessed her last sin, about the beautiful gentleman, who passed every day:

I blush to say, I've winked at him--and he has winked at me!

This shocked Father Paul for, as he explained,

If you should marry anyone respectable at all,  
Why, you'd reform, and then what would become of Father Paul?

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So he pulled up his cowl, the ballad went on to state--and Louise went on to act--and trotted off to tell the news to Robber Brown.

They came on together, while the Father repeated the news, and stood consulting in the corner, while Alice, from her actions, seemed to be thinking still of the sorter.

Robber Brown took it quite calmly. He decided to be quite kind to Alice about it--merely to

Nab that gay young sorter, terrify him into fits,  
And get his wife to chop him into little bits.

He argued that Alice, after that, would not love him any more. So, while Father Paul exited, Robber Brown lay stealthily in wait, assisted by his wife. Presently along came the gay young sorter again, waving his hand jauntily to Alice. Robber Brown sprang out, crossed directly in front of the sorter, who appeared not to see him at all, and proceeded to track him up and down the stage two or three times, with Mrs. Brown trailing in the rear. After the three had gone up and down twice (Alice, also, oblivious to her parents' presence, and throwing kisses to the sorter) Robber Brown finally "took a life-preserver" in the shape of a stout-looking stick, and pretended to fell the gay young sorter. Immediately Mrs. Brown bounded up with a piece of chalk, and proceeded to mark him off in pieces for dissection, for, as Robber Brown remarked: 269

I have studied human nature and I know a thing or two--  
Though a girl may fondly love a living chap, as many do,  
Yet a feeling of disgust upon her senses there will fall  
When she looks upon her lover chopped particularly small!

Indeed, this terrifying sight as far as it went, seemed to have the desired effect on Alice. To be sure, she fell in a dead faint, and Father Paul had to catch her, while Mr. and Mrs. Brown, and two more bandits (in bandannas) carried off the late sorter; but immediately afterward a young bandit, very much like Robber Brown except that he was smaller, came in and was patted with obvious admiration by Mr. and Mrs. Brown, who led him up to Alice. She recovered slowly, sat up, and presently accepted his attentions with pleasure. Father Paul gave them his blessing, while Marie said:

And gentle little Alice grew more settled in her mind,  
She never more was guilty of a weakness of that kind,  
Until at length good Robber Brown bestowed her little hand  
On a promising young robber, the lieutenant of his band!

After that the curtain was drawn again, while the girls dressed for Holmes's "It Was a Gay Young Oysterman." This, while it was good, was not the hit with the audience that "Gentle Alice Brown" had been. When it was finished, and the oysterman and his bride were seen "keeping a shop for mermaids down below," the girls took down the curtain, and while more music was played the performers hurried into their pretty dresses. Then they came out, and strolled about the camp with the audience.

"Where are Vicky and Sandy?" Winona remembered to ask Helen, as they met after the curtain was down. "Did they come?"

"I think so," said Helen, rubbing hard at her cork mustache. "Adelaide, did you see Sandy anywhere?"

Adelaide, who was just braiding her hair, turned.

"Yes, I did," she said. "She's here somewhere, with another little girl. I saw them not long ago."

Winona went in search of them, for when you ask a guest to an entertainment it's only polite to hunt her up. It was not hard to find the sisters. They were sitting with Louise, eating home-made ice-cream.

Winona sat down by them.

"I'm awfully glad you came, Vicky."

"So'm I, too," said Vicky. She seemed rather shy here in the camp, but she looked happy. "I'm having a nice time."

"I'm glad," said Winona. "Did you like the moving pictures?"

"Yes," said Vicky, "they were awfully funny. And--oh, Winona, I've picked out a name."

"What is it?" asked Winona.

"Janet. Of course people can call me Vicky still, if they want to, but my real name will be Janet. I asked uncle, the way you said, and he said I did have a middle name, Janet, after my grandmother."

"Oh, that's splendid!" said Winona. "I'm named after my grandmother, too."

"That makes us a sort of relation, doesn't it?" asked Vicky.

"Why, I hope it does," was the hearty reply. 271

"And there's something I wanted to ask you about," said Vicky--now Janet--shyly. "Alone, I mean."

"Come over here with me, and we'll walk up and down and talk about it," invited Winona.

Vicky took her hand, and they strolled off down one of the wood-paths.

"I'd rather not ask Louise," explained Vicky, "because--well, she laughs so about everything. She might laugh at me. And that other girl is sort of grown-up talking. But--well, it's--I'd like to be like the rest of the people--other little girls, you know--and it's dreadfully hard when you haven't any father or mother, and your uncle's an artist with a temp'rament. Sometimes he gets us governesses, and they say we're queer, and sometimes we just do as we please. But--well, there isn't anybody to show us things."

She looked at Winona wistfully, as if she thought she could show her how to be just like other children all at once.

"Why do people always come to me to show them how?" wondered Winona to herself. "I don't know any more about how to do things than the other girls."

She did not realize that it was her sunniness and sympathy--her Ray-of-Lightness, as Louise called it--together with a certain straightforward common sense, that made girls who wanted help come to her. They could be sure that she would not laugh at them, or tell anyone else what they had said, and they were sure of advice that had brightness and sense.

"What sort of things do you want me to tell you?" 272 asked Winona. "I'd love to help you, but some of the others know lots more about things than I do."

"It's you I want to ask," said Vicky decidedly. "It's my clothes, to begin with. Are they right?"

Winona stopped and looked Vicky over. They were out in the open by now, and it was bright moonlight, so she could see plainly what the little girl had on. It was a blue taffeta, very stiff and rustling, trimmed with plaid taffeta and black buttons. By its looks it had been bought ready-made, for it had a sort of gaudy smartness. It was of good material, but somehow, it was cheap-looking. Also by its looks, bread-and-butter had been eaten on or near it.

"You mean your dress?"

"Yes," said Vicky. "It isn't right, is it? But I don't know what to do about it. I bought it myself."

"You mean your uncle gives you the money, and you go and buy your own things?" asked Winona.

"Oh, yes," said Vicky. "But the ones the governesses used to get weren't much better. There was one governess who always picked out bright green. I hate green, anyway. And sometimes the cook used to. She would yet if I'd let her. But I won't. I don't think it's any of her business."

"Well----" Winona hesitated.

"Well, what had I better do?" demanded Vicky.

"I don't know!" said Winona frankly. "But I do know that that silk dress is wrong. Why don't you get summer dresses, chambrays and gingham and organdies?" 273

"I don't know," said Vicky. "I never thought about it. Silk is better, isn't it?"

"I don't think so," said Winona. "It doesn't wash. You see this dress isn't very clean."

"No," acknowledged Vicky. "Does being clean count such a lot?"

"Goodness!" Words failed Winona. "I tell you," she said finally. "Why don't you come over here and join the Blue Birds, Vicky? Marie could tell you a lot of things and it would be the quickest way to learn a lot about being like other people, if that is what you want."

"I'd like to," said Vicky, "but I sort of keep house."

"I have an idea, then," said Winona. Now, when Winona had ideas her friends usually waited to hear what she had to say. "Why couldn't some of the girls come up and stay with you, after Camp is over? It will be quite awhile even then before school opens. We could help you--show you how to do things."

"Oh, I'd like that," said Vicky. Then she stopped, doubtfully. "That is, if I could pick out the ones."

"Of course, you'd invite your own guests," Winona assured her. "And we'd pay what we cost your uncle extra.... But what about him? It's his house, and he mightn't like it."

"Oh, he'd never care," said Vicky. "He never knows much about what goes on, anyway! And I know he'd like to have me learn how to be a well-bred little gentlewoman, because he talks about it sometimes. And anyway he's going off somewhere where he can't take us some time soon." 274

"Then I don't see why we can't manage it!" said Winona enthusiastically. "But I can tell you now about the clothes. You want to buy dresses that will wash. And you don't ever want to play in silk dresses, or even organdies or batistes--tree-climbing, and things like that, I mean."

"I might get some middies, like you wear," said Vicky thoughtfully. "And I suppose, long's I'm going to reform, I might as well get Sand to keep her dresses on. She goes chasing out in her underwaist and petticoat sometimes."

"Oh, that was why she hadn't any on when Louise found her!" said Winona, seeing a light.

"Yes," confessed Vicky. "What's that noise?"

"That's the horn," said Winona. "It must mean that it's bedtime. She's playing 'taps.' Mrs. Bryan signals us with it, always."

"I think I'd like to be a Blue Bird," said Vicky. "But I like the other plan better," she added quickly.

"We're going to be here quite a while longer," said Winona, "so you'll have lots of time to think whether you want us and whether your uncle will be willing."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Vicky as the two went back to camp.

## 275 CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

It was quite true that the Camp was not to break up for some time, owing to the Wampoag people's appetite for Camp jellies and linens; but so far as Winona was concerned, life under the greenwood tree received a sudden check.

It was a harmless-looking letter enough that the detachment of Blue Birds brought up from the post-office. Winona pounced on it with a cry of joy. "Oh, a letter from mother!" she said. "And we only had one yesterday, Florence!" So she tore it open.

"Dear Little Daughter," it said, in a rather shakier handwriting than was usual with Mrs. Merriam. "I am sorry to have to tell you, as you are having such a splendid time, that we need you here at home. Yesterday, just after I had mailed my last letter to you, I slipped on the wet cellar stairs, and went down from top to bottom, and the result is a badly wrenched ankle. The doctor says that it is a severe sprain. Clay is a good little soul, but he can't do very much more than the helping out, and your father has to have his meals and everything. So I shall have to ask my little girl to come home and keep house for me. I will expect you the day after you get this. Your loving mother."

"Oh!" cried Winona. "Oh, poor mother!"

"What's the matter!" asked Florence.

"Mother's sprained her ankle on the cellar stairs," said Winona, "and I have to go home. You needn't, Floss." 276

"I shall, though," said Florence--and the younger Miss Merriam was a very determined little person. Her eyes filled with tears. "Frances and Lucy and I had a secret hike all planned," she said. "Oh, dear, it is so nice in camp! But I won't let you go home and nurse mother all alone, and you needn't think it!"

Winona didn't argue. She gave the letter to her little sister to read, and went off in the woods to be by herself. She climbed up to the platform that two of the girls had built, and sat there. There was no use denying it, she did not want to go home. She was going, of course, and going to nurse her mother just as well as she possibly could, and look after her father with all the powers she had learned in the Camp Fire activities. And she was sorry her mother's ankle hurt her--very, very sorry. But--oh, dear! There was a beautiful new dance that Edith, who went into Wampoag and got lessons, which she passed promptly on, had been going to teach her. There was a new kind of cooking she had been going to teach a group of Blue Birds. There was a new dive--well, there were any amount of things, that if anyone had asked her about, she would have said she simply *couldn't* break off. But she had to. And cooking at home in August was very different from doing it in the woods with a lot of other girls--and everyone she knew well was going to stay here--

Winona sat up and mopped her eyes.

"This isn't the way to follow the law of the Fire!" she reminded herself. "I can glorify work just as well home as here--better, in fact, for it's pretty certain there'll be more work to do!" She laughed a little.

"Coming up, Winona!" called Helen from below.

"Come on!" called back Winona.

"What's the matter?" inquired Helen when she gained the platform. "You've been crying."

"I've got to go home." Winona gave the news briefly. "Mother's sprained her ankle."

"Oh, what a perfect shame!" said Helen.

"I know I'm taking it like a baby," said Winona with a gulp, "instead of being noble and acting as if I liked going home. And of course I'm going. Only--only I do wish mother had picked out any time but this to sprain a perfectly good ankle!"

"Can't she get somebody else to come take care of things?" asked Helen. "I don't know how on earth we'll get along without you, Win. You never say much, but somehow you're the centre of things. We'll miss you awfully!"

Winona blushed at the compliment, and reached down to pat Helen's hand.

"You're a dear, Helen, to think so. But you'll all get along all right. It's I that will have most of the missing to do. No, there's nobody mother could get. Aunt Jenny's off in the White Mountains, getting well from something herself. And all we have at home is Clay--the little colored boy mother got at the Children's Aid. From what Tom said he's a regular Topsy. No, I have to go home. Oh, think of it, Helen! Hot housekeeping all August and half September, with every 278 single girl I know well up here, canoeing and swimming and folk-dancing and all sorts of splendid things! You'll all have beads down to your feet."

This time it was Helen who patted Winona.

Presently Winona mopped her eyes again and threw back her shoulders.

"Come along, Helen; I've had my little weep out. Now I'm going to tell Mrs. Bryan about it, and trot off home looking pleased to death at the prospect."

They swung themselves down from the tree-house, and started back to camp at a slow run. There was a good deal to do. There was everything of Winona's to pack, and Florence's, too, if she was really going, and she insisted that she was.

"I won't be a bit of trouble," she said, "and I'll be a real help. You'll see!"

So they packed everything, and said good-bye to everybody, and were paddled up the lake to Wampoag, where they were to take the train for home. They had to stop over at the Scouts' camp and break the news to Tom. But Winona invited him fervently to stay where he was. She knew that with the best will in the world to be useful a boy makes more work than he does, and has to be cooked for to quite an extent. Tom said he would be down the next day to see his mother, but he would go back again.

"Good-bye, dears," said Mrs. Bryan, who was seeing them off, when she parted from Florence and Winona at the dock, "I know you'll be happy. Remember we'll miss you all the time, Ray-of-Light. And 279 I don't know what I'll do without Florence to run errands for me. Come back as soon as your mother can spare you."

"We will," said Winona. "Only it feels like the poetry--don't you remember?"

"Remember what I tell you, says the old man to his son--  
Be good and you'll be happy--but you won't have any fun!"

"Just the same," said the Guardian, "being what you are, Winona, I'd venture to promise you that in the long run you will get more happiness out of being happy than out of having fun."

Winona laughed as she kissed her good-bye.

"I'm going to plan ways for glorifying work and being happy all the way down on the train," she said, "but I haven't any--well--thoroughly planned--yet!"

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It was nearly nightfall when Winona reached home, for she had not started till a late afternoon train. She found her mother established in the living-room, where a door opening on the hall gave her a good view of the kitchen, and Clay in it. She looked well, but tired, and her foot was bandaged and on a pillow.

"You're sure you didn't mind coming home, dear?" was the first thing her mother said. "It was a shame you had to!"

Winona had to reassure her mother so fervently about her being willing to come back, and even liking to, that she began to find she really did! It was pleasant there, after all. The garden was full of blooming flowers, and it was a cool, pleasant day. 280

"What shall I do first, mother?" she asked, as she and Florence sat each with one of their mother's hands, and tried to tell her all about everything at once.

"The first thing for you to do," said Mrs. Merriam, "is to get baths and put on cool dresses, both of you, and come down to dinner. Your father and Clay are getting it. You aren't to do a thing till to-morrow, dear. You must be tired with your trip."

"I don't think anything could tire me!" said Winona blithely. And she and Florence, as each of them in turn took baths

in the one thing a camp doesn't possess--a bathtub--felt that it was good to be home and have mother pet you, after all!

"It certainly is good to have you back, children," said their father, as he sat with a daughter on each side of him after dinner. They had their mother out on the back porch with them. It was nearly as large as the front one, and she could be moved, couch and all, through a front window with very little trouble. "Now I can have an afternoon off from housekeeping. But I've done well, haven't I, Mary?"

"You certainly have," said Mrs. Merriam, "and it's been hard for you, too. But now that I have my Camp Fire Girls back nobody's going to need to do one thing."

"Not a thing!" said Florence. "We've learned ever so many things, mother. We're going to house-keep better'n you ever did!"

The family shouted. It was so like Florence.

"I don't think quite that," said Winona modestly. 281 "But we're going to have a lovely time running things, anyway!"

So next morning the "lovely time" began.

It seemed queer to waken on a mattress instead of on a pine bed; still stranger to hear the alarm-clock go off. Winona did not like alarm-clocks, and she threw a pillow at it before she stopped to think. But she got up as it told her, for all that, and was downstairs in twenty minutes. She had put on a blue ripplette work-dress, fresh and pretty. It was pleasant to have on a pretty frock instead of the camp uniform.

"There are lots of nice things!" she said to herself sturdily. "I'm going to enjoy myself every minute, if I have to tie a string to my finger to remind me!"

She found Clay, whose acquaintance she had made the night before, already down. The cereal was in the double boiler and the coffee in the percolator, already.

"Hit ain' much to do fo' breakfast," said he encouragingly. "Ah do it maself, mos'ly." And indeed he proved so expert that all Winona found left her to do was gathering the flowers for the table, and cutting the oranges. Breakfast had more frills than usual, though--Winona had come home prepared for work, and she found some to do. The oranges were loosened back from their skins like grape-fruit, there were finger-bowls with flower-petals floating on top, the cereal dishes had little plates underneath, and even the hot corn-bread, which Winona, by the way, discovered Clay did not know how to make, was stacked in a highly artistic log-cabin pattern. Winona, with a little white 282 apron over her fresh blue dress, sat and poured the coffee importantly. Her father smiled with pleasure, as she sat opposite him, flushed and pretty and dainty.

"Well!" he said. "This is certainly a fine beginning, Winnie! Did you learn all this in the woods?"

Winona colored with pleasure.

"No, I think I knew most of it before I went," she said. "That is, all but the corn-bread--that was an experiment."

"And see!" said Florence. "Flowers in the finger-bowls!"

"But you mustn't work too hard, little daughter," said her father, as he went into the living-room to bid his wife good-bye before he went to business.

Winona followed him closely with her mother's tray. Mrs. Merriam was dressed, and Mr. Merriam had helped her downstairs and to her couch. It had been rather fun to arrange the tray with doilies and the daintiest china. She carried it in as her father came out.

"Good-morning, mother!" she said gayly. "Things are going beautifully, and housekeeping's fun!"

"That's my brave little girl!" said her mother. "But I must warn you, Ray-of-Light, that you'll get over-tired if you try to put on too many trimmings. The trouble with housekeeping is, you never get a vacation. It keeps on all day long. Simplify all you can."

Winona laughed. "I refuse to start on your tray!" said she.

She made her mother as comfortable as she could, then went back to the kitchen. 283

"Now, Clay," she said, "Mrs. Merriam's sent for me to come home to run things. You and I are going to get as much fun out of the work as we can, and do it just as well and as fast as we know how. Aren't we?"

"Yas'm," said Clay doubtfully. "But dey ain' no fun to be got outen washin' dishes," he added with conviction.

Winona looked thoughtful.

"No, I suppose there isn't," she admitted. "But there ought to be. Up at the Camp we got credit for what we did, if it was done right. I wonder----"

"You mean dem credits what folks buys groceries with?" interrupted Clay.

"No," said Winona. "But--I'll tell you, Clay, I have a plan! I'll put a chart up here on the kitchen wall. Every time you get the dishes washed and put away in half an hour, without breaking them, three times a day for a week, you get credit--for fifteen cents. What do you think of that?"

"Ah like it!" said Clay. "But Ah rather have de two cents a day."

"All right," promised Winona rashly. "Now go ahead with the dishes while I put fresh paper on the shelves."

"Don't take it too hard, dear," Mrs. Merriam warned her once more, when Winona ran in, breathless from vigorous bedmaking, to report progress. "What are you going to do now?"

"Now? Nothing till lunch time. I'm so glad we have dinner at night. It'll be lots easier to get the 284 hardest meal when it's cooler, and there's been a rest between."

"You dear child!" said her mother, reaching out her hand to Winona where she sat by the sofa. "You're bound to look on the bright side."

"I'm bound to glorify work and be happy," said Winona gayly. "Now, mother, I'd like some money. I'd rather not start with a regular housekeeping allowance till Monday. But right now I want a dish-mop, and a soap-maker, and some new white oil-cloth for the kitchen dresser. Can I have all that?"

"Certainly," said her mother. "Keep the kitchen as spic and span as you can. The fresher the surroundings, the easier it is to work."

So after luncheon, which wasn't much trouble because there was no man to cook for, Winona and Florence went shopping, leaving Clay singing "Ma Honey Man" cheerfully over his dishes. The money their mother had given them bought not only the things Winona went after, but pink and blue chambray for aprons for herself and Florence, and red for Clay.

"The pretty aprons will make it more fun to be in the kitchen--don't you think so, Florence?" asked Winona.

Florence, naturally, thought so, too, and they bought them and made them up before the day was over. Florence asked of her own accord for definite things to do. And an idea came to Winona--that they start a system of home honor-beads.

"Of course they won't really count," she explained 285 to her little sister, "but they'll always be there to remind us of our work."

"That will be lovely!" said Florence, "but what will they be like?"

"Wait and see," said Winona.

That day was all used up making the new long aprons and the mob-caps to match, dainty and Kate-Greenaway looking. But the next morning after the beds were done they went to sit with their mother. She said they could make the beads there with her. Winona ran out into the garden and brought back a handful of flowers that she put in water, and set beside her mother's couch.

"How do you feel, mother?" she asked.

"It doesn't hurt badly at all," said her mother cheerfully.



Winona carried out the tray, and moved about, straightening her mother's room a little more before she sat down to her work.

"You're sure we're not in your way, mother?" she asked.

"Indeed you aren't!" said her mother. "You don't know how lonely I've been with all my children gone. And do let in all the air and sunshine you can, dear. It may be hot later, so that we'll have to shut out the light a part of the day."

"All right," said Winona, doing it. Then she called to Florence.

"Florence, will you get the oil-paints that we use 286 for stencilling?" she asked. "I can borrow them, mother, can't I?"

Mrs. Merriam was perfectly willing, and while Florence was getting the tubes of paints, and the brushes, Winona brought out a jar of ordinary kidney-beans from the kitchen. She spread newspapers on the floor and on the table, and when Florence came back with the paint she set to work.

"Just beans!" said Florence scornfully. "You can't make beads out of *them*!"

"Can't I?" said Winona, "Well, if you don't like them when they're done, I'll buy you a string of any kind of colored ones that you want."

"Thank you," said Florence, settling down to watch her sister.

The first thing Winona did was to pierce each of the beans lengthwise with a steel knitting-needle, which she heated in the alcohol lamp's flame. This was the longest part of the work. Next she strung them all on a long piece of cord. Then while Florence held one end of the cord and she the other, Winona dashed each bead in turn with touches of color, one after another--rose, blue, green and violet. She finished them with little flecks of gold paint, and fastened one end to the chandelier, where the beads could swing free and dry soon. The girls got luncheon while the beads were drying.

After luncheon was eaten and cleared away the girls went to work on their beads again. Florence held the string while Winona went over them with shellac.

"I think we'd better put them outdoors this time," 287 she decided. "The smell of the shellac may worry mother."

So they swung the beads from the hammock rope.

"Do you think you will want to wear them?" she asked Florence, as she came back and began to clear away the paint-spotted newspapers.

"I should just think I would!" said Florence enthusiastically. "Why, they look just like the ones in the Wampoag stores, only lots prettier."

"Who told you how to make them, Winnie?" asked her mother. "They are certainly lovely."

"Nobody," said Winona. "I saw some like them, and thought I could do it--that's all."

"I think you ought to get a real honor-bead for that," said Florence. "I'm going to put down everything you do that I think might get honors for you."

"I'll keep track, too," said Mrs. Merriam. "That's a good idea, Florence. Then perhaps Winona's having to leave the Camp won't be such a setback. Give me a pencil, dear, and that little black notebook by it."

They wrote down the making of the beads.

"We must keep watch, you and I, Florence," Mrs. Merriam said.

Winona looked radiant.

"I'm going to write to Camp now, mother," she said, "and I'll ask Mrs. Bryan about counting things like this. It would be lovely if I got on as fast here as there--but I don't believe it's possible."

"Wait and see," said Mrs. Merriam.

## 288 CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Of course, things didn't always go smoothly, even with Winona's young energy and good-will hard at work. "Accidents will happen in the best regulated families" was a proverb whose meaning Winona learned thoroughly before she was through. There was, for instance, a tragic Saturday when she made ice-cream with most of the ice in the ice-box, and forgot to telephone for more. A sizzlingly hot Sunday dawned, with no ice to be had. So the Sunday chicken and lettuce were badly spoiled, not to mention various tempers. Winona, tired, hot, and with a consciousness of guilt, spent most of Sunday afternoon in the kitchen trying crossly to invent a Sunday night supper which did not need milk, eggs or salad. The day ended with a found-at-the-last-minute meal of potted tongue and canned peaches, and a general forgiveness all round, but it was a long time after that before Winona forgot it; indeed, she was known to get out of bed to take final peeps at the ice-chest and make sure it was filled.

Nevertheless, and in spite of all the mishaps that are bound to worry housekeepers, a light heart, a strong body and the fixed intention to make the best of things carried Winona triumphantly past her worries. Presently she found that things were settling into a regular routine, and that housekeeping was more interesting than hard. Best of all, she found she had a great deal of time to herself. 289

Then Tom came home. The Scouts had had to break up earlier than they expected, for two or three reasons. One was that Mr. Gedney had to get back to his business, another was that several of the boys worked, and had to get back, too. So Tom descended on his family, and Billy appeared next door. And things began to happen.

Tom tried faithfully not to be any trouble, and succeeded pretty well. And Mrs. Merriam's ankle got better, slowly, as bad sprains do. Presently she was well enough to be taken in a wheel chair to see her friends. She usually went to spend the day.

One day everything seemed particularly calm and serene. Tom had wheeled the mother to the other end of town, early in the morning, and she was going to be taken for a long automobile ride by one of her friends. Tom had taken a pocketful of sandwiches, and gone off for a fishing-trip. So Winona built a mound of more sandwiches for herself and Florence, and prepared to take a day off.

She was curled up on the front porch in a hammock, reading, when the first thing occurred.

"Does Miss Winona Merriam live here?" inquired a familiar voice; and Winona, looking up, saw Louise, dusty and beaming.

"Oh, Louise, you angel! How lovely it is to see you!" she said, jumping up and hugging her friend.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Louise, hugging back. "I came down on the train, and I'm here to spend the day, if you want me." 290

"Want you! I should think I did!" said Winona. "Come in and get cool."

"I'm not hot," said Louise, "but I *would* like a drink of water."

They were in the kitchen, fussing about pleasurably together, when they heard steps clattering up the porch.

"It's the ice-man," said Winona. "I must pay him."

She ran upstairs, and Louise went on helping herself to sandwiches. She had eaten three, and was considering whether she really wanted anything more till lunch-time, when a large, fishy hand dropped over her shoulder and took a handful of ham-and-lettuce ones.

"Tom Merriam! There won't be enough for lunch if we both eat them! I thought you'd gone off fishing for the day."

"So did I," said Tom leisurely, "but I found I hadn't. Where did you blow in from?"

"Camp," she said. "Winona's upstairs hunting for change. She thought you walked like the ice-man."

"Poor Win! She has that ice-man on her mind," said Tom. "Nay, nay, little one. For far other reason am I here."

He struck an attitude, with the sandwich he hadn't finished waving over his head.

"Got hungry?" asked Louise prosaically.

"Not at all," said Tom. "It was this way. As I was purchasing bait, I met my father."

"Well--did he send you home?"

"Not exactly. Only--there's a convention in town. A ministers' convention. And father's met two long-lost 291 college chums, which--or who--are coming here to dinner to-night. One has a wife. Better tell Winona, and have Clay put on some extra plates. And--I forgot--here's a fish I caught before I used up my bait and met father. Have him boiled or something for dinner with some of that stuff like mayonnaise dressing with green things in."

"Your father?" asked Louise frivolously.

"No, the fish!"

Tom rushed upstairs to change his clothes, while Louise thoughtfully ate another sandwich and called Winona.

Winona came running down the back stairs.

"Did you keep him?" she said. "I couldn't find where I'd put the change."

"It wasn't the ice-man," said Louise, "it was Tom."

"Tom?" asked Winona. "But he was gone for the day."

"Anyway, he's back. And--Winona Merriam, we'll have to make more sandwiches for supper, or dinner or whatever it is. Two ministers and one wife are coming here to dinner to-night."

Winona sprang to her feet and snapped her book shut.

"*Sandwiches!*" she said scornfully. "Don't you know you have to *feed* convention people? Mother would die, and the Ladies' Aid faint in a body, if we gave them sandwiches for dinner. No. They have to have a course dinner!" 292

"Where are you going to get it?" asked Louise meekly.

"Here!" said Winona. "I found one in a magazine the other day. Let's see what we can do with it."

Louise looked at Winona with respect. "Do you often rise to occasions this way?" she asked.

"This is the almost human intelligence that I have sometimes," said Winona.

"Sure it's intelligence?" asked Louise doubtfully.

Winona led the way upstairs toward her scrapbook without deigning to reply. Both girls bent eagerly over the course dinner she had pasted in on the last page.

"Shellfish, soup, fish, salad, roast, entrees, vegetables, dessert, black coffee, cheese, nuts and raisins," she read.

"These, in the order named, constitute a simple dinner."

"I'd like to know who brought up the woman who wrote that," commented Louise. "The Emperor of Russia, I should think."

"Anyway, I am going to try to have it," said Winona. "We can have oysters to begin with, because Tom always has some around for bait."

"That kind mayn't be good to eat," objected Louise.

"Never mind. Perhaps these people won't know the difference, just think they're a brand-new kind."

"You don't open them till the very last thing, and then you serve them with ice on their heads to keep them cool, and lemon slices. I know that much," said Louise, following Winona downstairs again.

"Then we won't open them till the very last thing, 293 and forget all about them till Tom comes downstairs again," said Winona with decision. "Soup--let's see. Oh, I know! Mother had me make some bouillon this morning, for old Mrs.

Johnson down in Hallam's Alley. We'll serve that in the bouillon cups, and make Mrs. Johnson some more to-morrow, or take her chewing-tobacco instead. She'd much rather have it, she says."

"All right. And Tom brought some fish in," supplied Louise.

They went out to inspect the fish, and found that there would be plenty, if it was carefully distributed.

"Doesn't everything dovetail beautifully?" said Winona thankfully. "What's next?"

"Salad," said Louise, consulting the scrapbook. "Haven't you any lettuce in the garden?"

"Of course we have!" said Winona. "All there is to do is to pick it."

"Well--the roast?"

But here there was a deadlock.

"There isn't a thing in the house to roast," said Winona, "and this time of year you have to telephone early to get things." She moved to the telephone, and pulled herself back in dismay. "This is Wednesday!" she said. "And all the shops are closed Wednesday afternoon!"

"It isn't afternoon, yet," said Louise.

"Look at the clock," said Winona.

And it was afternoon--one o'clock.

"Perhaps that's a stray butcher," said Louise, as they heard a long, loud knock at the kitchen door. 294

But it was only Billy Lee, who explained that he had tried every door but this in vain. He had a note to Winona from his sister. He perched himself on the stationary tubs while she read it, on the chance that she might want to write an answer.

"Come over and stay with me this afternoon," it said. "I have a headache."

"Oh, I can't, Billy!" explained Winona, looking up from the note. "We have dinner to get for two ministers and their wife, and--Billy, you have a great deal of steady common sense. I heard father say so. What would you do if there wasn't any meat, or any time to get any, or any place to get it?"

Billy tucked his foot under him, and looked serious, mechanically taking a sandwich as he thought. The girls were eating them, too, for it had been silently agreed that that would be all the lunch they would bother with.

"Why not try Puppums?" he suggested. "If they're missionaries they're used to roast dog. Every missionary has to learn to like it in the last year of his course."

"Yes, or we might roast Clay," said Louise scornfully. "Why don't you suggest that? He isn't any use, goodness knows, and they may have been missionaries to the cannibals!" She glanced at the small darky, who was sitting on the cellar door in happy idleness, singing fragments of popular songs to himself.

"You ought to make him useful," said Billy. "Here, Clay, get up and help your young ladies." 295

"Ah *is* helpin' 'em," said Clay with dignity; nevertheless he rose and came in for further orders.

"Down home," continued Billy, "we always kill a chicken when we expect a minister."

"But we haven't so much as a papier-mache Easter chick," objected Louise.

"The people next door but one have," said Winona excitedly, starting up. "It's against the law to keep chickens within the city limits, but they do it. But they're away for the day."

"They're always getting into your garden and tempting poor old Puppums to chase them," said Billy sympathetically.

Winona, acting on his suggestion, went to the door and looked out.

"Yes," she said. "There's one there now. There nearly always is."

Louise lifted one eyebrow. "Well?" said she.

"Very well," said Winona. "Come on, ladies and gentlemen. We are going to catch a next-door-but-one chicken, and pay the Janeways for him to-morrow."

"When Puppums caught one last week," said Florence, appearing suddenly, evidently in full possession of the conversation, "you tied it round his neck!"

She went down under the tubs to extract the wronged animal and sympathize with him on the injustice of life. But only Puppums heard her, for Billy and Winona, hindered by Clay, were careering wildly about after a vociferous, very agile fowl. It was finally captured with a crab-net, and led away to execution 296 by Clay. It appeared that he, also, had had experience in chicken-killing for clergymen. He had often done it, he said, very artistically.

As he and the rooster passed on their way to the scaffold, Winona ran into the kitchen, and out again with a scream.

"It's Henry!" she said wildly. "It's Henry! We've caught the Janeways's pet rooster! Clay! Clay!"

"Yas'm!" said Clay, appearing with Henry's head in one hand and his body in the other. "Dis heah roosteh she certn'ly is good an' daid! I c'n fix 'em!"

"And they loved him so!" said Winona tragically. "They were telling mother only yesterday how intellectual he was. 'Not clever, merely,' Mrs. Janeway said, 'but really intellectual, my dear Mrs. Merriam!'"

Billy clutched the tubs in order to laugh better, and Louise sat down just where she was, on the floor.

"What's the matter?" called Tom, running downstairs very clean and tidy.

"Winona's murdered the Janeways's intellectual rooster!" explained Billy; and lay back on the tubs again.

Tom, too, began to howl.

"What--Henry?" he said, when he could speak. "Oh, Winnie, you *have* done it! They've had him in the family since their grandfather's time anyway. Well, you'd better make the best of it, and have Clay take out his interior decorations. Maybe we can eat him if you boil him long enough. I could have robbed the 297 Martins's tank of their tame goldfish if I'd known you wanted a dinner of household pets." He sat down on the tubs by Billy and went off again.

"I suggested Puppums in the first place!" gurgled Billy.

"Never mind, Win," said Louise, going over to Winona, who stood mournfully by the window, "I'll attend to Henry. We'll boil him first and then bake him, and he'll be quite good. I'll make the stuffing for him, too. I know how quite well."

"Oh, thank you, Louise!" and Winona brightened up.

"Oh," teased Billy, "then the remorse isn't because he's Henry, but because he's tough?"

"It's both," said Winona, "but there's no use being uselessly remorseful when you have work to do. I can feel ever so badly about it when I go to bed to-night. I often do. The fish is all right, anyway, and I'm going to make some sauce hollandaise for it out of the cookbook. Really all you need to know how to cook is a cookbook and intelligence."

"I see the cookbook, but where----" began Tom.

"Billy Lee," said Winona firmly, "if you came to see Tom, won't you please take him out on the front porch and see him?"

"I didn't!" said Billy coolly. "I came to bring Nataly's note, and I'm staying to see you invent a ten-course dinner, if you'll let me. Let me stay to dinner, Henry and all, and I'll make your fish-sauce. All you need is a cookbook and intelligence----" 298

"Two clergymen," counted Winona, "one wife, father, Louise, Tom, me--Florence is going out to supper, she said this morning. You'll just make eight, Billy. Come and welcome, only please leave the fish-sauce alone."

But Billy had already tied himself into a big pink apron, and was mixing butter and flour in a saucepan with every sign of knowing what he was about.

There was a brief, tense silence while the chicken, some white potatoes and onions, were put on to boil, sweet potatoes laid in the oven to be baked, and Clay sent into the garden for lettuce and radishes. They did not light any of the gas-stove burners except the one under the late Henry, because the afternoon was yet long. They went out on the porch and talked for a couple of hours. There was a general feeling that they mustn't get too far away from the dinner.

About four Winona remembered to say to Tom, "Have you any bait-clams or oysters? We need them for our first course."

"Bait!" said Tom. "Considering we've stolen the meat from the neighbors, and robbed the poor of the soup, and I caught the fish, we can afford to buy a few blue-points. I'll go down and get them. Is there anything else you'd like while I'm down town?"

"Is it too late to order ice-cream?"

"I'm afraid so," he said. "The ice-cream places won't be open till five-thirty, and then only for an hour, you know."

"The dairies are," Winona remembered. "Please buy some cream on your way back, and we'll find a receipt and make it. There are nuts and raisins in the house. Crackers--cheese.... I think we'll have enough for dinner."

"I shouldn't wonder!" said her brother thoughtfully, as he walked away to get his wheel.

The others went back to the kitchen, and Billy went on with his sauce hollandaise--that is, he took it out of the bowl of water where it had been cooling, and put it in the ice-chest.

"Why, it's good!" said Winona, rather impolitely, having sampled it on its way.

"Of course it's good!" said Billy serenely. "Didn't I ever tell you about our old cook down south, and how I adored her? I used to tag round after her all the time when I was small--never would stay with my nurse--and I learned a lot of things. And seeing I'm going to be invited to this banquet, looks like I'd better make the ice-cream for you."

"Oh, can you?"

"Watch me!" said Billy for all answer.

As a matter of fact, when Tom got back with the blue-points and the cream, he and Billy went to work together, and they compounded a pineapple ice-cream that was fit for the gods. Louise, meanwhile, stuffed the parboiled fowl and put him in to roast. The boys captured Clay, who had gone back to his cellar door and his songs, and set him to crushing ice. Winona sat down on the tubs where Billy had been, and gave herself up to deep thought. The entree had not yet been solved. 300

"Pancake batter?" she said aloud at last, in a mildly conversational tone.

"I'm sure of it," said Billy, poking his head in from the back porch.

"If I take that pancake batter I got ready for to-morrow morning, sweeten it, and put butter and eggs and peaches in it, I don't see why it wouldn't be peach fritters. Anyway I can try ... then you drop them in the lard...."

She thought it over a little longer silently. Then she jumped down, and went into the cellar for the batter and the peaches, and brought them out on the back porch, near the ice-box, to experiment with. Tom had gone back to the pantry to see if there was cake enough, but Billy was still packing ice and salt around the ice-cream.

"Dear me!" said Winona, setting down her load on a low shelf. "I hate to see you doing all this. You're company, you know, and here we're letting you get a lot of the dinner. It worries me!"

"Don't let it," counselled Billy, tossing a lock of hair out of his eyes and going on with the packing. "I'm having a good time. To tell you the truth, I always have a good time over here. I rather feel as if I belonged to the family--and that's a nice feel to have. You're a good little chum, Winnie.... If you don't let me pack all the freezers and things I want to I'll just have to go back to merely being let in once in awhile, like company."

"I feel as if you belonged to the family, too, Billy," 301 said Winona sincerely, "and if your packing freezers is any sign

you do, go right on, please."

"I am," Billy assured her with his usual placidity.

"The lard's hot, Win! Come see if they'll frit!" called Louise from within; and Winona dashed off with her batter. But it was nice to have Billy feel that way about things. He was certainly the nicest boy she knew...

They began together, she and Louise, to drop the yellow batter into the fat, while Clay and the boys turned the freezer by turns. Louise and Winona had become so excited about their dinner by this time that a mere fritter-sauce was nothing. They made one, it seemed to them afterwards, looking back, without knowing how they did it, and it was very good at that.

"Oysters, soup, fish, salad," muttered Winona for the twentieth time. "I believe everything's ready but the cream, and that must be almost finished. Boys!" she called out through the back door, "will you please go and deck yourselves for the feast? Wear your tuxedos, please. We're going to keep up the Merriam reputation for hospitality, or die in the attempt!"

"All right--just wait till we pack it," Tom called back.

But she saw that they had separated in quest of their evening clothes before she left. Tom had just acquired his first set, and wasn't particularly fond of them. But he put them on meekly, just the same.

"We'd better dress, too," said Louise. "I'll run over home and slip some things in a suitcase, and be right back again."

## 302 CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Louise was as good as her word. She was back in a very few minutes, and in Winona's room again. She found her friend standing in the middle of the floor, her dress exactly what it had been when she left.

"Better hurry," warned Louise. "We haven't overmuch time."

"Hurry!" said Winona despairingly. "How can I? Do you know what I've done? I've hung away every single thin dress I own in the wardrobe, instead of putting them in the wash. I knew there was something I'd forgotten, and I couldn't think what it was."

"Oh, how dreadful!" said Louise. "You'll have to put on something gorgeous, to match the boys' clothes."

"What can I do?" asked Winona sadly, and swung open the doors of her wardrobe. There, crumpled, forlorn, dejected, hung a line of dresses each hopelessly past wearing in its present state.

"Isn't that a nice trick for a Camp Fire Girl?" inquired Winona scornfully. "It's the kind of thing you'd lecture a Blue Bird kindly but firmly for doing, and make her see what a wreck she was going to make of her whole life if she kept on."

"Never mind," said Louise soothingly. "You've had so many other things to do, it's no wonder you couldn't remember that. Haven't you anything but wash dresses? Where's your yellow silk voile?"

"I *did* remember that!" said Winona with a reluctant grin. "I sent it to the cleaner's day before yesterday. It won't be done till Saturday."

"What about your flowered dimity? Is all the freshness out of that? You don't wear it often."

"I sent for it from camp, for one of the girls to use in the Samantha tableaux, and the girl still has it, I suppose. She never gave it back. I forgot to ask for it, in the hurry of getting home. There's no use trying to think. I've thought and thought, and everything else is too hot to wear, or soiled. There's nothing for it but a shirtwaist and skirt."

"Anything of mine would be up to your knees, and baggy," said Louise thoughtfully. "Wait a minute, Win, till I think."

"I'll do my hair while you're at it," said Winona.

"Why couldn't you borrow something of your mother's?" was Louise's next thought.

"Mother wears long dresses," said Winona. "If she didn't I could--I'm nearly her build."

"Couldn't you pin them up?"

"I declare, I believe I'll try," exclaimed Winona daringly. She ran out of the room, while Louise went on with her own dressing, and came back in a minute with a fresh, silk-lined black organdy over her arm.

"This is all there is for it," she said. "Mother would be willing, I know, if she were here. She always wants me to wear her things."

"It's lovely," said Louise admiringly, as Winona's pink cheeks and blue eyes appeared above the soft black, "but I'm afraid we'll hurt it if we put pins in it." 304

"I won't pin it up, then," said Winona. "The guests will never know the difference. I don't suppose father has mentioned my age."

"You'll look awfully old!"

"I don't care! Have you any black hair-ribbons you could let me have, Louise? I see where I never get the honor bead for not borrowing, by the way!"

"You won't lose it on account of my ribbons," said Louise, "because I haven't any. But I don't believe hair-ribbons and your gown would match. Did you know you had a train?"

"No!" said Winona joyfully. She loved "dressing up," and this was beginning to look very much like it. "I'll do my hair



up on top of my head, and nobody'll think I'm younger than twenty!"

"Good!" said Louise, and helped. They wound the goldy-brown mass up on the very top, and completed the effect by hunting out a pair of plain glass eye-glasses, which Tom had brought from the ten-cent store once long ago.

"You look twenty-five anyway!" exclaimed Louise, and Winona fitted the glasses on her nose and assumed a severe expression to match. "Put your hair back off your forehead--that way.... That's splendid!"

"I do look old!" said Winona, with a pleased expression. She trained up and down the room and looked at herself in the glass. "I'll go down now."

"I'll be there in a minute," said Louise. "Don't wait for me."

When Winona sailed down in her disguise to put the 305 finishing touches to the table she found that Tom was already dressed, and was standing meekly at the head of the board. And also he had found time to decorate it.

"How do you like it?" he asked in a tone even meeker than his attitude.

Winona looked, pulled off her glasses in order to see better, looked again--and dropped down in a hopeless heap in the opposite chair. She did not say anything--the situation was beyond words.

"Don't you like it?" said Tom again sweetly.

"Like it!" said Winona, beginning to giggle.

Four half-barrel hoops had been wreathed in smilax, and arched across the table at regular intervals, one at each end and one between each two places. In the middle of the table, completely hiding the olives, lay a half-opened gridiron, also wound with smilax. It was all very neatly done, for Tom was very neat-handed; but the general effect was rather startling.

"It--why, it looks like somebody's grave!" said Winona protestingly.

Her tone was so stern that Puppums rose from beneath the table and tried nervously to hide under the sideboard, revealing as he went a decoration of smilax round his neck, continued in a garland down his spine, fastened at the tail. He did not seem to like it.

"That's what it is!" said Tom complacently, as Winona pounced on the abject dog and unwreathed him. "Here's the magazine I got it from. You said to. All there was in this month's copy was a page of neat and inexpensive grave decorations. I copied the 306 handsomest one in the bunch, 'William R. Hicks; complete cost of decoration three dollars and twenty cents.' That thing in the middle's a Gates Ajar, or the nearest I could get to it. It got a prize, too."

"Do you suppose I want William R. Hicks's grave, or anybody's grave, on the table when we're having a special hand-made dinner that I've spent most of the afternoon on?" demanded his sister, laughing in spite of her objections.

"What's the row?" asked Billy cheerfully, appearing in the door with an armful of roses and ferns.

"I followed Win's directions about the table, and she doesn't seem to like it," said Tom in a voice that was intended to sound injured.

"What's the gridiron for? A gentle reminder of the Cannibal Isles? We don't really know yet that they're missionaries!" said Billy.

"Sorry you don't know a Gates Ajar when you see it," said Tom, grinning.

"I do," said Billy decidedly. "That isn't one. Here are your roses, Winnie. You look like somebody's step-mother in all that train and glasses. Where did you get them?"

"Winona!" called Louise, tearing downstairs, "I've just remembered that Clay has been calling the fritters 'crullers' ever since we made them. He'll send them in with the ice-cream if he isn't told not to."

She fled to the kitchen.

"Step-mother.... M'm," said Tom with a light of mischief in his eye; and followed Louise. 307

"Look at the table!" Winona implored Billy.

Billy looked, took in the whole effect, and, as Winona had done, sat down to laugh in comfort.

"It's not so bad, after all," he said comfortingly when he was through. "Let's take the bones out of these green wicket-things, and lay the vines straight across the table. They'll get into the eats, likely, but we can't stop for that. Can't you do anything with that gridiron ajar? I should think the stuff on it would look all right around a low bowl of roses."

"Maybe it would," said Winona with renewed courage, and set to work stripping it while Billy took the supports from the smilax arches, and laid it flat, with an occasional rose at intervals. They found a low, wide bowl that, filled with roses, and wound with smilax, made an excellent centerpiece.

Winona stepped back to view the general effect with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Billy! I'll remember this afternoon of you to the longest day I live!" she said.

"Billy! We want you!" called Louise from the kitchen in a smothered voice. Winona would have gone, too, for she was sure she heard giggles, but just at this moment Clay came in, and his inability to understand why he shouldn't add a wide red cheese-cloth sash to his white apron drove everything else out of her head. By the time she had argued him out of it the others were back, suspiciously grave.

"Not here yet!" sighed Louise. "I feel as if I couldn't wait to have them taste my stuffing! Let's go 308 into the living-room and sing, or go out back and play tag, or something."

"Dar dey is!" shouted Clay, running to the window.

The rest rushed, too, and looked over his woolly head.

"A big one and a little one and a middle-sized wife, like the Three Bears," commented Winona. "They're coming in by the front way. Oh----"

That was because the fritter-sauce boiled over just as the guests were ushered in. Both the girls forgot their manners, and ran to the kitchen to rescue it. So only Tom and Billy were in the living-room to be introduced.

"My wife and daughter will be here presently," said Mr. Merriam, who had evidently forgotten that Mrs. Merriam was expected to stay away till about nine. "Tom, will you run up and tell your mother and Winona that our friends are here?"

But even as he spoke Winona, a little breathless, but trained, psyche-knotted and eye-glassed, appeared in the doorway with Louise behind her. She came in with an air of dignity which her mother could not have bettered, and greeted her guests regally, in her excitement forgetting to wait for an introduction.

Not so Tom.

"My step-mother, and my sister," he whispered in the ear of Mr. Driggs, the tall minister, who promptly addressed Winona as "Mrs. Merriam." Winona thought he said "Miss," and went on talking excitedly about everything she could think of. Her father was 309 deep in conversation with Mr. Donne, the other guest, who was a classmate of his. Tom's murmured "Mother isn't home yet--Winona's managing things----" scarcely stopped the flood of reminiscences.

"I never heard that your father had a second wife," remarked Mrs. Driggs to Louise, who had selected her to talk to.

"It's quite recent," said Louise sadly; and Mrs. Driggs did not ask any more questions.

Before things got more complicated Clay announced dinner in an awestruck voice, and fled instead of holding aside the portieres for the guests, as he had been instructed. He had a good deal on his mind, for he could not read very well yet, so they had had to sketch each particular thing with a pencil, and pin the series of pictures against the wall in their order as they were to come. The pictures of the oysters and the sweet potatoes were very much alike, and, as Clay confided to Winona afterward, they worried him considerably.

Winona seated her guests with the same dignity which had been hers ever since the train had; and led the conversation in the ways it should go, nobly assisted by Billy. It appeared Billy could talk like a grown-up person of forty when he wanted to--which wasn't often, for Billy was a rather silent person ordinarily. Tom and Louise were never,

either of them, troubled by shyness, and except that they seemed to laugh a little more than the facts warranted they were just as usual.

Every course, from old Mrs. Johnson's stolen bouillon to the black coffee, came on in its proper place and 310 was eaten with enthusiasm. As the third course came on without mishap, Winona began to relax, and by the end of the dinner was quite at ease. Mr. Donne, beside her, was liking his dinner so much that for quite awhile Winona did not have to do any talking. When he did talk it was about Ladies' Aid Societies. Now Mrs. Merriam was the President of the Ladies' Aid of her church, not to speak of various things that she held minor offices in, and she was quite an authority. Mr. Donne had been told this, and he thought he was talking to Winona about something she was an authority on. Winona was rather bewildered, for she had never attended a Ladies' Aid meeting in her life, and like the inventor of the Purple Cow, till she was grown up "never hoped to see one." Nevertheless she struck out valiantly, and was getting on fairly well when Mrs. Driggs's voice struck across the general tide of talk.

"Mrs. Merriam," she said, "I'm sorry to trouble you, but I never can eat fish without a sprinkle of nutmeg. Could you have a little grated on this delicious bit for me?"

"Why, yes!" said Winona cordially. "Clay----!"

"Hit ain' none, Miss Winnie," interrupted the small servant in a distressed whisper.

"Then go borrow one at Mrs. Lee's, and hurry!" whispered Winona. "Anything, so you only get it and have it for Mrs. Driggs's fish."

Clay looked black for a moment. Then a comprehensive grin dawned on his face. He trotted out 311 with Mrs. Driggs's fish, and brought it back again a few moments later, liberally nutmegged and very much to the lady's taste. She ate it all and was happy.

"You seem to have no difficulty in keeping discipline in your family and among your step-children, Mrs. Merriam," said Mr. Donne, almost directly after the nutmeg episode. "You must seem more like a sister than a mother to these tall young people."

Winona was struck dumb with astonishment for a moment. She looked across at Tom, who looked back at her imploringly. She could see what had happened out in the kitchen, that time that the three others had been there alone and giggling. But this was no time to have a scene. She braced herself and settled her glasses more firmly, after one reproachful look at the three culprits, whose faces were tense with apprehension.

"Yes," she replied quietly, talking, as Tom afterwards said, like a seraph, "They do seem like that. They are charming children, really."

Mr. Donne went on talking about it. Winona went on replying with serene dignity. Even when he praised the cook she took it serenely, and when the Ladies' Aid came in sight again she called to mind a visit from the secretary at which she had been present, and quite overwhelmed Mr. Donne with particulars.

Mrs. Driggs had been a little quiet and hard to talk to at the beginning of the meal, but Billy--Billy the quiet, Billy the shy among his own kind--proved to have the art of talking to grown people down to a fine point. He not only kept his end up, but he steered 312 nobly away from risky questions of relationship, and other such perilous topics.

"It certainly gives you confidence to be a married woman!" thought Winona, as she excused herself and went to see about unpacking the ice-cream. Clay's performance so far had been perfect, but she did not trust anybody but herself to get the cream successfully out of the freezer, without getting salt into it.

"Where did you find that nutmeg, Clay?" she asked curiously, as they arranged the cakes and ice-cream, and put melted chocolate in a pitcher.

"Law, Miss Winnie," said Clay, his smile nearly coiling itself around his ears, "I done tole you hit wasn't none. I des took dis yere ole wooden button-hook what hangs on a nail here, an' grate a li'l bit of it off. De minister's wife she never know de diffunce."

Winona caught her breath, but this was no time to be overcome. The dessert had to be served. They were all laughing at something Louise was saying, when she came back. "I wonder if they would look so happy if I told them about the nutmeg!" she couldn't help thinking, but it did not seem a very good thing to tell anyone, just then--although it was too good to keep always. The Camp Fire heard about it afterward.

Coffee, cheese, nuts and raisins, all appeared and disappeared, and then Winona led her sated guests out on the porch. She felt triumphantly virtuous. The dinner had been good straight through, the talk had gone smoothly, and the company seemed very happy and pleased. She sat down by Mrs. Driggs and went on talking. She was going on prosperously when Mr. Donne's voice, from the other end of the porch, stopped Mrs. Driggs's account of her last maid.

"How long did you say you had been married, Mrs. Merriam?" he inquired.

"Married?" echoed Winona desperately, trying to think of a way out.

She was spared giving her answer. There was a sound of footsteps and wheels within the house, and Mrs. Merriam's wheel-chair, propelled by Florence, appeared in the doorway.

"I got back sooner than I thought I should, Frances," said the real Mrs. Merriam's cheerful voice. "Florence came over and told me that our friends were here, so I had her wheel me back as soon as I'd had my supper. We didn't get home from the ride till a little while ago, and I couldn't get here for the meal."

Winona did not wait to hear more. There was a long open window at her back. One spring--and all that remained to tell the tale of "young Mrs. Merriam" was an overturned porch-chair and the distant sound of a tearing garment. Up in her room, pulling down her hair and slipping on her fresh middy-blouse and white skirt, Winona heard the laughter, and knew the others were being forgiven, and the whole tale told.

"Anyway!" she said to herself as she took off her glasses, shook down her hair, washed her hot face and prepared to walk downstairs and meet the family. "Anyway, that couldn't have been a better dinner if I'd been married sixteen times!"

## 314 CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

"This paying for deceased poultry," said Tom, "is getting monotonous. First there were those pedigreed geese up on the river, and now Henry. I know Henry never cost as much as the Janeways say he did."

"I think we're paying for all it cost to send him to prep school and college," suggested Louise, who was staying over a day. "You forget that Henry was intellectual."

"He was tough," agreed Tom, "if that's any sign! So was paying for him."

"Oh, Tommy dear!" said Winona penitently. "Henry was really my fault. I oughtn't to let you join in with me. I can pay for Henry very well alone."

"I think I see you!" said Tom. "No, Winnie, united we stand, divided we fall. I help pay for Henry--see you later--just remembered how late it is."

He bolted upstairs, leaving Winona, Louise and Billy on the porch staring at each other.

"What's struck Tom?" asked Billy. "First time I ever knew him to be in a hurry."

"Why, I don't know," said Louise. "I thought you two generally hunted together."

"Not to-night," said Billy. He vaulted the railing casually, and walked out into the middle of the lawn, where he could see Tom's lighted window. "He's up there with all the lights on, walking the floor as if he had something on his conscience, trying to tie 315 all his neckties, one after another," reported Billy. "There--there goes the third one. He's going to try a red one now."

"I know what it is," said Winona, seeing a light. "I've just remembered. He's going to call on a girl. He's been going to for all week, and just got braced up to it. He's been wearing me out all day, asking me for things to talk to her about. I suppose he's trying to decide on the necktie that matches his socks best."

"But, great Scott, he's been to see girls before!" protested Billy. "I've been along when he's been seeing girls, and fellows, and even old gentlemen, and he never took it so hard."

"It's a very particular, grown-up call," explained Winona, "with a card-case and a cane, and everything like that."

"What's the cane for?" asked Billy, who had come back to his seat on the porch. "Girl collecting them?"

"I think it must be for moral support," put in Louise.

"I didn't know he had one," said Billy. "Where did he get it?"

"Christmas present last year," explained Winona briefly. "Billy, don't you wish we were all back at Wampoag, having a moonlight swim?"

"I certainly do," said Billy. "Not but that your porch is nice, too," he added with the politeness he never seemed to forget.

Before they could lament camp life any further, Tom rushed down the stairs. 316

"Winnie! Winnie! Where's my blue scarf?" he called from inside the front door.

"On Louise," Winona called back promptly. "Don't you remember, you asked her if she didn't want to wear it with her sailor-suit?"

"Can I have it, Lou?" he asked, coming out. "I wouldn't ask you, but it just matches my hatband."

"Certainly you can have it," said Louise, with chilly politeness, unfastening it and handing it to him.

"Good-evening, Mr. Merriam," said Billy, grinning, and rising in order to make a very low bow. "I never thought you were this far on the way to being a perfect lady, old boy--Mr. Merriam, I mean."

"Going to call on an awfully correct girl," said Tom off-handedly. "I say, Lou, can I have that blue class-pin of yours?"

"Certainly," said Louise again, still more coldly, detaching it and holding it out. "Anything else you think you'd like?"

"Not that I can think of," said Tom, taking the class-pin. "That's a good old Lou," he ended, adding insult to injury. Then he sat down and pulled out his mother's celluloid memorandum tablets. He laid them on his knee and looked at them earnestly, as he adjusted the tie and the class-pin.

"Did you think of any more things for me to say after I landed the California Exposition on her?" he asked his sister.

Winona looked over at Billy to see if he saw the funny side of it. There was no use looking at Louise, 317 for in her present sulky frame of mind she would not have seen anything funny in a whole joke-book.

"How would the next election do?" she suggested gravely.

"M-m--all right," said Tom, entering it. "That won't last forever, though, because all you can ever do is guess which man will get it. I think you might help a fellow out, Lou. You're generally so clever."

"Ask her how she likes her hats trimmed," said Louise scornfully, without turning around to him.

"Oh, no," said Tom, "that's too silly a question." But he put it down just the same. "Let's see. That ought to carry me on till nearly nine.... Caesar! It's time I went! Don't mind if I go off and leave you, do you Bill?"

"Not a bit!" said Billy calmly. "I'm all right. But"--Billy's eyes twinkled--"don't you really think you ought to wear your tuxedo, old fellow? Much more correct, you know. I saw it in a Hints to Best Dressers' column awhile ago. It said that no true gentleman was without evening clothes in the evening."

Tom looked uneasy, but he was firm.

"I won't get into that thing for anything less than a dance or a hand-made clerical dinner," he said, thoughtlessly jamming his hat down over one ear the way he usually wore it, then putting it straight with a jerk. "Great Scott! I must hurry!"

"My ears and whiskers! The Duchess! Won't I catch it if I'm late!" quoted Louise scornfully from Alice in Wonderland, as Tom dived down the steps. 318

"What on earth's got into Tom!" asked Billy. "The idea of doing that because you like it!"

"I don't know," said Winona. "It is queer, isn't it?"

"Going off acting like he was all grown up!" mused Billy, still lost in wonder at such a waste of a perfectly good evening.

"I do wish you wouldn't always say 'like' for 'as if,' Billy," interrupted Louise sharply. "I hate it."

"We always say it that way down home," said Billy.

"That's no reason for your doing it here! Being born in China doesn't make it good manners for you to eat with chopsticks," said Louise, walking into the house and slamming the screen-door behind her.

"Can't Ah help yo' find yo' tempah, Louise?" Billy called teasingly after her, with a purposely exaggerated Southern accent. There was no answer.

"You'd be cross, too, if you were Louise," Winona defended her friend. "One of the things she stayed down from camp over to-night for was that she and Tom were going off to kodak some cloud effects for a magazine prize. And she was going to try to get some photographs that would count in Camp Fire work, too. And Tom's walked off, forgetting all about it."

"Why didn't you remind him?" asked Billy sensibly.

"Louise wouldn't let me. She said she'd go straight back if I did."

"Well, she needn't have taken it out on me," said 319 Billy plaintively. "I didn't break any engagements. I suppose she

has a red-haired temper."

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Meanwhile Louise, after she banged the screen-door, had gone straight through the house to the back. Mrs. Merriam was in the living-room, which prevented her crying there. She was very much hurt at Tom's forgetfulness. They had been chums for a long time, and this particular expedition after cloud effects had been something they had planned long before the Scouts' camp broke up. And now Tom had gone gayly off, forgetting all about it. It really was horrid.

Crying on a bed is hot work in summer, so she decided to go out back and do it. She sat on the porch, put her arms on the back of a chair and began to cry.

But circumstances seemed to be against her. Puppums, who had been asleep under a chair, got up, yawned, sauntered across the porch, and sat down by her. Then he proceeded to whine for her to turn around, make a lap, and take him up into it.

"Oh, do stop!" said Louise indignantly, when the whining had gone on steadily for some minutes. But if you took any notice of Puppums he merely argued that a little more work would get him what he wanted, and went on begging. In the present instance he answered Louise by lifting his nose further up in the air, and howling, as if he wished to assure her that he felt for her.

"You mean old dog!" said Louise, jumping up. "I'll settle you!" Puppums was very much pleased. He had an optimistic disposition, and he thought it was a game. He ran around and around the porch, finally, when he began to see that Louise was in earnest, hiding under the ice-chest, where he knew nobody could follow him. Louise stopped short, and eyed the ice-box. It occurred to her that she was thirsty.

"This is what you might call being guided," said she, and opening the lid, looked in. She found a bag of lemons, a bunch of bananas, and she thought she remembered where Winona kept the bottled cherries and the cookies. She went into the kitchen and began work, and in a very little while was on her way back to the front porch with a tray, designed to show her remorse for being cross, piled with cookies and fruit lemonade. Mrs. Merriam, to whom she offered the first glass, pronounced it very good indeed, and sent her on her way. Puppums danced wildly about her, with the idea that she was clearing a table, and he might get bones.

Winona and Billy were still talking as placidly as if Tom had not been wrestling with a formal call, and Louise with a bad temper, for the last twenty minutes.

"Cookies--oh, and fruit lemonade! Louise, you dear!" cried Winona, while Billy took the tray and put it on a table.

"Won't you have some, Billy? I know you like it, and--and I *do* like your Southern accent," she added in a rush.

"Thank you, Louise," said Billy. "I like your accent, too--and your fruit lemonade--very much." 321

They both laughed. "Let's bury the hatchet," he added. "Louise, these certainly are fine cookies."

The three were still sitting comfortably over their refreshments, even Puppums crunching cakes contentedly in a corner, when Tom hurried up the steps and banged himself down in a chair. His hat was jammed to one side in the old unceremonious fashion, his gloves had vanished, and even his cane was nowhere to be seen.

"Have some," said Billy tactfully before Tom could say anything. They pushed the cakes toward him, and poured him some lemonade in Winona's glass, and after he seemed less gloomy they got him to talk.

"Tell us all about it," said Winona soothingly.

"Nothing to tell!" said Tom in something rather like a growl.

"Have another cookie, and tell us all about it," repeated his sister in a persuasive voice. And after awhile, when he had had some more cookies and another glass of lemonade, he told them, gradually.

"Well, I sent in my card, of course," he began. "Asked for Miss Davis."

"Of course!" said Winona; for her brother's usual custom was to call up from the sidewalk, "I'm coming over to-night," and then to walk unceremoniously in whenever he thought of it, that evening.

"I did that all right, thank goodness!" said Tom. "The maid kept me waiting about a year, with a copy of Snowbound, and a Gems from Shakespeare, and a pug-dog made out of plaster, to amuse me. The Davises never seem to sit around in their rooms and 322 on their porches like other people. Just as I got to the point of thinking I'd better go back home Mrs. Davis walked in. I was so surprised at seeing her, instead of Elsie, that I couldn't think of a blessed thing to say--so I fished up this!"

He jerked the tablets out of his pocket and threw them to Winona.

"Keep 'em away from me," he said. "I never want to see the blessed things again. First thing I found was 'Civil War.' I'd picked out that for a start anyway--thought it would be nice and general, and we had it in History last term, so I knew a lot about it. You'd have thought that would have lasted awhile, wouldn't you?"

"Seeing that the real thing lasted four years or so, I think it might have," answered Billy.

"Not a bit of it!" said Tom mournfully. "Mrs. Davis turned out to have had a grand-uncle or something in it, and she said it was a painful subject. I don't think she ever had a grand-uncle. I believe she didn't know anything about it, and just invented the old fellow to get out of talking about it!"

"Mercy, what suspicions!" said Winona, laughing. "You certainly have nearly ruined your lovely disposition. Never mind, Tommy, I sympathize with you. What did you tackle next?"

"Tariff-reform, I think," said Tom.

"What is tariff-reform?" asked Winona. "I never could understand it exactly."

"Don't ask me to say it all over again!" begged Tom. "I was getting anxious by that time for fear I 323 wouldn't have subjects enough left to use on Elsie. You know she isn't much of a talker. But I had to say something, and Mrs. Davis didn't, and I couldn't think of anything but this foolish book. Mrs. Davis didn't seem to care much about tariff-reform, either, so I gave that up and looked at the list again, and chose 'Weather.' She did warm up a little at that. But the best weather won't last forever, and you could just hear the silence bump every little while.

"Then I got desperate, and used up Politics and Canoeing and the California Fair, and all the rest. Folks, I finished off every last thing I was going to talk to Elsie about, before she ever appeared! Except about trimming hats--that seemed such a foolish thing to ask a woman that old about."

"They discussed Measles and Mice, and Music, and everything else that began with an M," quoted Louise from her favorite Alice in Wonderland.

"Don't mind her," said Billy as soberly as he could. "Just go on. Did Elsie Davis ever come down at all?"

"Yes," said Tom, "she did. Just as I finished my last subject, if you please! She seemed to be dressed for a party, but she said she wasn't. She sat down at the other end of the room, and tried to see if she couldn't keep as still as her mother. Mrs. Davis stayed right there, too, and smiled like an alligator--and there was I without an idea in my head or on the memorandum!"

"Didn't they even show you the photograph album?" inquired Louise, forgetting to be offended.

"They wouldn't talk, I tell you!" 324

"Well, what *did* you do?" asked Louise.

Tom grinned a little, shamefacedly.

"Well--I simply yanked out that old tablet, and began at Civil War again. I said 'As I was just saying to your mother!' and I gave her every subject over!"

His hearers howled, and after a minute Tom himself joined in. "Did it work better this time?" asked Winona at last, wiping her eyes.

"Not a work," said Tom cheerfully, reaching for the last cookie. "That is, all but the hat one. That was clever of you, Lou. She got almost human over that, and began to talk about how many engagements she had--had to break half of them. And I said 'I don't believe in breaking dates,' and suddenly I remembered the one with you to take the pictures--



and I left then and there, like a streak of lightning. I left my cane--I don't care--she can have it to remember me by. Louise, I owe you an apology the size of the house. Why didn't you remind me about those snapshots?"

"It's not too late," said Louise amiably. "The moon's just about right, now."

Tom went into the house after the cameras, sending his hat flying up to the hat-tree, followed by his gloves.

"Let's go, too," said Billy.

"All right," said Winona. She leaned back, and laughed, as they waited for the others to come out.

"I don't believe Tom will try any more formal calls till he's eighteen, anyway," she remarked.

"It seems a pity, though," said Billy, getting up. "He wasted a perfectly good cane!"

## 325 CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Louise went back to camp next day, and Winona went on with her work at home. Louise had left all sorts of presents and messages from the girls, and taken a great many from Winona away with her. Louise's visit cheered Winona up very much. There was only one hard thing about it--the news Louise had brought that the girls had extended the time of their stay again. The plan now was to stay in Camp Karonya till the fourteenth of September. School opened on the fifteenth. It seemed a long time to wait to see her friends again--for the doctor was certain that her mother would not be able to bear her weight on the injured ankle for a month to come.

Meanwhile Winona wrote to the girls, and her mother and Florence kept track, in what Winona considered a very wild way, of the things she did that should entitle her to honors. The honor-list and a sheet of blanks lived under her mother's pillow, Winona was sure. If it gave her mother pleasure she was glad to have her do it; but it occurred to Winona the day after Louise left that it mightn't be a bad scheme to collect a few honors herself, things that she was sure would count. Also she wanted some fun, and she had found that the acquiring of honors usually led to it. So Winona proceeded to "start something."

To begin with, next door lived Nataly Lee. Winona went over there the very afternoon of the day Louise 326 left, and spent the most persuasive three hours of her life, explaining to Nataly that they, as the only two Camp Fire Girls in town, ought to start some good times for other people, who, not being Camp Fire Girls, probably didn't know how. And before she went back to get supper she had persuaded Nataly she was right.

Next day she and Nataly, cheerful and enthusiastic, made a canvass of the girls in their classes who were staying home. Winona had rather gone on the principle that nearly everyone was off somewhere else, but she found it wasn't so at all. There were six girls beside herself and Nataly who were ready and willing to join a Porch Club that was to meet once a week, and have a picnic one week and a party the next.

Winona and Tom and Billy, with Nataly, even, helping once in a while, spent some time in furnishing the Merriam porch with chairs and hammocks and screens and lanterns. Then the boys went forth and invited their own friends with a lavish hand. The first porch party was a grand success, although there were about three boys to one girl. But that righted itself next time, which was three days later, for the Porch Club made an unanimous and prompt decision that it wanted to meet twice a week. And more girls wanted to join. So, although they were not like her own old comrades, Winona found that she was making friends whom she would never have had at all, if it had not been that she was cut off from her own set of girls, still having good times at Camp Karonya. As for Nataly, she was a marvellously different person. The 327 work of management, of social entertaining, proved to be exactly what she could do best. And having to teach things to others (for the Porch Club added an afternoon session, devoted to hand-craft work and reading aloud), made her find that she could do things very well here that she hadn't liked doing in camp at all! As for Winona, she let Nataly run things as much as she wanted to. She herself was just what she had always been, Ray of Light, holding the girls and boys together by her brightness and her fondness for them. She was the centre of things, after all. Not that she realized it, particularly; she only thought how queer it was that there were so many nice, friendly people in the world, willing to do nice things and have nice times if you only suggested it. And there are, too.

"And, Helen and Louise dear," Winona wrote to her own two best friends back at Camp Karonya. "Some of the girls in our classes that we scarcely knew, and thought were quiet and stupid, are as nice and bright and funny as ever they can be, and ever so Camp Firey! I believe we can organize another Camp Fire this fall. And I have my housework arranged so that I have two hours in the morning, and most of my afternoon and evening, to do what I please with. So I have a gorgeous time working for honors. It's a scheme I shan't tell you about till it's all worked out and over with, but I think it's going to work all right. Florence suggested it, bless her heart. Love to the whole Camp Fire, and ask them to take a hike for me!" 328

Winona's supplementary plan for honor-winning had been suggested to her this way:

One day she was on the back porch, mending, and Florence had four bosom friends out in the back garden, making a most fearful racket. Mrs. Merriam had a headache, and Winona knew that in a little while the headache would be worse, or that she would have to go and send Florence's friends home, which meant hurting that independent young person's feelings.

"Florence," called Winona, "wouldn't you and the other girls like me to come down to the end of the garden and tell you fairy-stories?"

The little girls seemed to very much want to. So Winona took her mending and her rocker, and they sat down in the

shelter of a big tree. Winona told them stories till it was time for her to go in and see about supper. By then her mother's headache was over. But after supper Florence came up to Winona, and said, "The girls want to ask something. They want to know if you won't tell them stories other times, too!"

"Why, what a lovely idea!" said Winona. "Of course I will!"

So to the Porch Club and the housekeeping Winona added two hours every other day, telling stories to Florence and her small friends. She felt rather shy over it at first, but gradually it began to be more and more easy. When the fairy-tales ran low she went to the library and hunted out the Robin Hood and Arthur legends, and even history stories once in awhile. And one day when she was rummaging the card catalogue 329 for more stories about King Arthur she found out that the Malory book was only a very little of what there was to be told. Everything seemed to lead somewhere else. So the story-hours kept to King Arthur, except for one fairy afternoon a week, for the rest of the month, and Winona learned a good deal about him that she would never have found out by herself.

After one or two meetings, sewing as she talked, she began to show the children a little about darning, too. They brought stockings after that, and kept quieter, she found, when they were working as well as she. The most surprising thing of all to her was that she had time enough for everything. The story-hours took care of all the household mending that her mother did not do; the Porch Club, which met at different houses in rotation, was no trouble at all, merely a good-times affair. The housekeeping was running smoothly, and Winona got time for letter-writing and walks with the boys, and even practice on the piano. There were lots of places where she and Nataly and Tom and Billy could go trolley riding on hot evenings, and there were always boys and girls running in and out, asking her to go places and do things. Winona discovered, as others have before her, that you can have a very good time by staying home in the summer.

One night, toward the last of August, her mother asked her a question.

"How would you like to go back to camp to celebrate your birthday, dear?" she asked.

Now Winona's birthday, her fifteenth, was on the 330 eleventh of September, just two days before the girls were coming back.

"I would, very much," she said, "but do you think you will be able to spare me?"

"I am quite sure of it," said her mother. "Indeed, I might be able to take charge of the house again by next week, if my ankle improves as it is doing now."

"Oh, no," said Winona, "I won't take the risk. Besides, I couldn't leave the story-hour children, and the Porch Club has to have some things planned for it that I think I'd better help with. But if I can go up there over my birthday it will be lovely."

"You'll have to get somebody else to tell the stories while you're gone, then," said Florence. "I don't want my story-hour broken up!"

"By all means, don't break up Florence's private story-hour!" said Tom. "Why don't you do the story-telling yourself, Floss?"

But, "That's true, Florence," said Winona. "I think I can find one of the girls in the Porch Club who will do it. You see, mother dear, I'll need to get all the loose ends up out of the way if I go back even for three days!"

But all the loose ends tied themselves up neatly. Ellen Marks, one of the nicest of the Porch Club girls, promised to tell the stories for the two days Winona would miss. Nataly could look after things elsewhere, and by the eleventh Mrs. Merriam was nearly as well as ever. So the morning of that day saw Winona on her way back to Camp Karonya, with joy in her heart, and 331 her ceremonial costume over her arm, in a special bag.

The whole crowd of girls rushed out to meet her, and sang a cheer from the time her motor-boat was in sight till she landed. They surrounded her, and carried her into camp, where supper was nearly ready.

It seemed very good to be back. The pine needles smelled as woodsily as ever, and the long wooden table looked very homelike, with its brown, chattering girls surrounding it, all trying to tell her everything at once. As soon as supper was over Helen and Louise swept her off to her old tent.

"Hurry," said Helen. "Get into your ceremonial costume, honey. Heap big Council Fire to-night."

"Council Fire?" said Winona in surprise. "Why, is it the night for it?"

"This is an extra-special," explained Helen hastily. "Here, Win, let me help you."

She began to unfasten Winona's travelling suit.

"You have a lot more beads than you had," Winona observed a little wistfully, as Helen took her own gown down from the wall and began to put it on.

Helen laughed as she slung the long string of colored honor-beads around her neck.

"Maybe you'll catch up," she remarked carelessly. "You'll doubtless get an honor or so to-night."

"Oh, yes," said Winona. "I ought to get a bead or two for home-craft, and I did some story-hour work, too."

"As if that was all you did!" said Helen indignantly; and stopped herself short. 332

"Hurry up, girls!" said Louise, sticking her bead-banded head into the tent. "Time to begin. Hear the drum!"

"Oh, the nice old drum!" cried Winona happily, as she heard its well-remembered monotonous sound in the distance. The three girls linked arms, and hurried to the council hill.

"Oh, but it's good to be back!" said Winona for the third or fourth time, as she sank into her place in the circle around the first place. She listened dreamily as the ceremony of fire-lighting and all the rest went forward. Things had been happening, it appeared. The reports were given one by one. Winona listened on, and Hike the Camp Cat trotted noiselessly over the ground and curled himself into Winona's lap. Even he remembered her. She stroked him and listened.

Helen, they told, had managed to coax an old farmer down the road, the identical one they didn't buy the music-box of, to stop setting traps that hurt rabbits. Louise had, after many hoppings about in solitude, actually managed to master five folk-dances. Adelaide and little Frances had made an emergency dash down the river to get the doctor, when one of the other little girls had fallen from a tree and broken her wrist. There were other things as thrilling.

"And all I did was stay home!" thought Winona as the tales went on, and the beads were awarded. Then she sat up and began to listen more closely, for Mrs. Bryan, Opeechee herself, was rising to give this report, and that was something sure to be special and 333 worth while. When Opeechee related what a girl had done it was an honor worth having.

"You have all done well, and deserved the honors you have been awarded on this, our final Council in the open," began the Guardian. "Here, together in the woods, it has been easy to follow the law of the fire. We have found it so, I know.

"But now I want to tell you about a watcher of the Camp Fire who has been following the law without any of the helps we have. She gave up the camp and its good times, and went back to assume the duties of a woman--the tending of the real Fire of home. She had charge of the household. She kept a family of four beside herself, including an invalid mother, comfortable, well taken care of and happy, for one month. She made a pleasure out of her duties, and showed others how. Besides this, she collected girls who had not much social life and gave it to them. She led them for a month, three times a week. She told children stories and taught them sewing every other day for a month. And through it all she was happy, and made light for others wherever she went. She has carried the Torch of happiness and health and work and love, and passed it on undimmed to others. Winona, the Flashing Ray of Light, is just fifteen to-night. That is the earliest age at which anyone can be made a Torch-bearer--but I think she deserves the rank, Sisters of the Camp Fire. What do you say?"

Before the girls could answer Winona was on her feet with the kitten in her arms, scarlet and protesting. 334

"But I didn't do all those wonderful things, Opeechee!" she cried. "I just did what there was to do. I like to plan things and have people have good times. I just wanted to get as good a time out of it all as I could. And I don't believe I have enough honor beads to be a Torch-bearer."

Mrs. Bryan paid her protest very little attention.

"What do you say, Sisters of the Camp Fire?"

The girls burst out into cheering.

"Winona, Flashing Ray of Light, is to take the rank of Torch-bearer to-day," repeated Mrs. Bryan inexorably. "Rise, Winona."

And as Winona stood up again (she had sat down hastily after her first objection) Mrs. Bryan repeated the honors she had won, and that her mother and Florence had kept track of so faithfully. She had expected the honor for story-telling, but the one for marketing--and the one for folk-songs--and--why, that Alice Brown pantomime had meant an honor bead! So had bringing in and arranging her mother's invalid-tray, and the Porch Club and the story-hour had given her a double right to the Torch-bearer rank, which requires leadership of a group. Then, of course, the wood-craft honors she had won before she went home--she had known about those. But to think that everything, even that hilarious ten-course dinner she and Louise had planned, had been good for a bead! Winona had far more than the fifteen required honors for the highest rank of the Camp Fire. 335

"Repeat the Torch-bearer's Desire, Winona," said Mrs. Bryan, and Winona, half in a dream, said,

The light which has been given me  
I desire to pass undimmed to others.

Mrs. Bryan stepped forward, and threw a string of beads over her head. She had not been in Camp till now, and so the beads had not come one by one as they generally did. She fastened the pin on Winona's breast, and stepped back, while the girls sang a tempestuous cheer.

Winona sat down on the grass, still bewildered.

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"Well, how does it feel to be a Torch-bearer--the only one in Camp?" asked Helen late that night, as the girls were undressing together.

"Wonderful--only I don't believe it, yet!" said Winona. "Think of all those honors that I never even dreamed I was getting--and to think I was having such fun getting them, too! It seems as if I ought to have worked so hard it was uncomfortable, somehow, to deserve them."

"It was dreadfully hard to keep the surprise a secret, sometimes," said Helen. "When your letters were a wee little bit lonesome, sometimes, we had hard work keeping Louise from telling. Oh, Winona, all the girls are so glad!"

"I'm glad, too," said Winona soberly. "And oh, Helen, I *am* going to keep on carrying the torch, too--as high as ever I can!"