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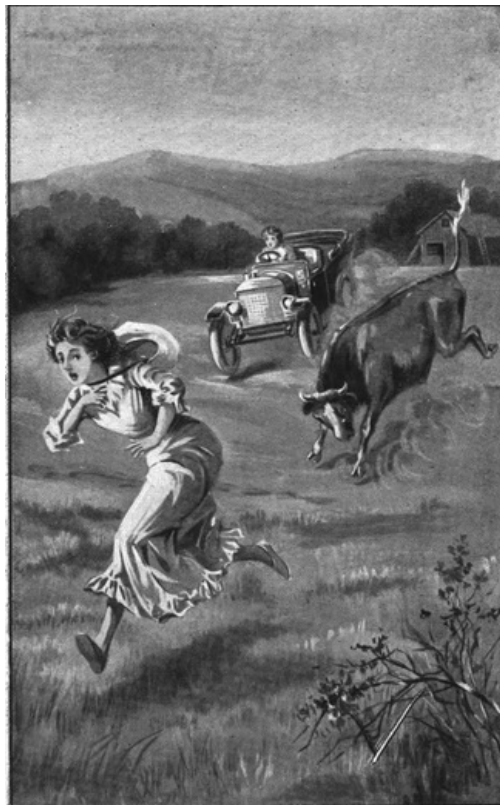
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AT ONOWAY
HOUSE; OR, THE MAGIC GARDEN ***



GLADYS TURNED THE CAR INTO THE FIELD AND
STARTED AFTER THE BULL AT FULL SPEED.

The Camp Fire Girls At Onoway House

OR

The Magic Garden

By HILDEGARD G. FREY

AUTHOR OF

"The Camp Fire Girls in the Maine Woods," "The Camp
Fire Girls at School," "The Camp Fire
Girls Go Motoring."

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THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AT ONOWAY HOUSE

THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AT ONOWAY HOUSE

CHAPTER I.—ONOWAY HOUSE.

"What a lovely quiet summer we're going to have, we two," exclaimed Migwan to Hinpoha, as they stood looking out of the window of their room into the garden, filled with rows of young growing things and bordered by a shallow stony river. Migwan, we remember, had come to spend the summer on the little farm owned by the Bartletts and earn enough money to go to college by selling vegetables. The house in the city had been rented for three months, and her mother, Mrs. Gardiner, and her brother Tom and sister Betty had come to the country with her. Hinpoha was temporarily without a home, her aunt being away on her wedding trip with the Doctor, and she was to stay all summer with Migwan.

"Yes, it will be lovely," agreed Hinpoha. "I've never lived in such a quiet place before. And I've never had you to myself for so long." Migwan replied with a hug, in schoolgirl rapture. She felt a little closer to Hinpoha than she did to the other Winnebagos. As they stood there looking out of the window together they heard the honk of an automobile horn and the sound of a car driving into the yard, and ran out to see who the guests were.

"Gladys Evans!" exclaimed Migwan, spying the new comers. "And Nyoda! Welcome to our city!"

"Please mum," said Gladys, making a long face, "could ye take in a poor lone orphan what's got no home to her back?"

"What's up?" asked Migwan, laughing at Gladys's tone.

"Mother and father started for Seattle to-day," replied Gladys, "and from there they are going to Alaska, where they will spend the summer. I hinted that I was a good traveling companion, but they decided that three was a crowd on this trip, and as I had done so well for myself last summer they informed me that it was their intention to put me out to seek my own fortune once more. So, hearing that there were pleasant country places along this road, one in particular, I am looking for a place to board for the summer."

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Migwan. "To think that we are to have you with us this vacation after all, after thinking that you were going to disport yourself in California! The guest chamber stands ready; 'will you walk into my parlor?' said the Spider to the Fly."

At this point "Nyoda," Guardian of the Winnebago Camp Fire group, formally known as Miss Kent, also advanced with a long face, holding her handkerchief to her eyes. "Could you take in a poor shipwrecked sailor," she sobbed, "one whose ship went right down under her feet and left her nothing to stand on at all?"

"It might even be arranged," replied Migwan. "What is your tale of woe, my ancient mariner?"

"My cherished landlady's gone to the Exposition," said Nyoda, with a fresh burst of grief, "and I can't live with her and be her boarder this summer! It's a cruel world! And me so young and tender!"

"Two flies in the guest chamber," said Migwan, hospitably. "Thomas, my good man, carry the boarders' bags up to their room, for I see they have brought them right with them."

"Save the trouble of going back after them," said Nyoda and Gladys, in chorus. "We knew you couldn't refuse to take us in."

"If ever a maiden had a look on her face which said, 'Come, come to this bosom, my own stricken

dear," continued Nyoda, "it's yon poet who is going to seed."

"Going to seed!" exclaimed Migwan, "and this after I have just opened my hospitable doors to you!"

"By going to seed, my innocent maid, I only meant to express in a veiled and delicate way the fact that you were turning into a farmer," said Nyoda.

In spite of the fact that Migwan and Hinpoha had just expressed such great pleasure at the prospect of being alone together for the summer, they rejoiced in the arrival of Nyoda and Gladys as only two Winnebagos could at the thought of having two more of their own circle under the same roof with them, and their hearts beat high with anticipation of the coming larks.

Supper was a merry meal indeed that night, eaten out on the screened-in back porch. "We are seven!" exclaimed Nyoda, counting noses at the table. "The mystic number as well as the poetic one. 'Seven Little Sisters;' 'The Seven Little Kids;' 'the seventh son of a seventh son.' All mysterious things take place on the seventh of the month, and something always happens when the clock strikes seven." As she paused to take breath the old-fashioned clock in the kitchen slowly struck seven. The last stroke was still vibrating when there came a ring at the doorbell. "What did I tell you?" said Nyoda. "Enter the villain."

The villain proved to be Sahwah. She looked rather astonished to see Nyoda and Gladys at the table with the family. "Oh, Migwan," she said, "could you possibly take me in for the summer? Mother got a telegram to-day saying that Aunt Mary, that's her sister in Pennsylvania, had fallen down-stairs and broken both her shoulder blades. Mother packed up and went right away to take care of her and the children. She hasn't any idea how long she'll be gone. Father started for a long business trip out west this week and Jim is camping with the Boy Scouts. If you have room ——" A shout of laughter interrupted her tale.

"Always room for one more," said Migwan. "You're the third weary pilgrim to arrive."

Sahwah looked at Nyoda and Gladys in astonishment. "You don't mean that you're here for the summer, too?" When she heard that this was the truth she twinkled with delight. "It's going to be almost as much fun as going camping together was last year," she said, burying her nose in the mug of milk which Migwan hospitably set before her.

"What do you call this house by the side of the road?" asked Nyoda after supper, when they were all sitting on the porch. Mrs. Gardiner sat placidly rocking herself, undisturbed by the unexpected addition of three members to her family. This whole summer venture was in Migwan's hands, and she washed hers of the whole affair. Tom sat on the top step of the porch, unnaturally quiet, with the air of a boy lost among a whole crowd of girls. Betty, fascinated by Nyoda, sat at her feet and watched her as she talked.

"It has no name," said Migwan, in answer to Nyoda's question.

"Then we must find one immediately," said Nyoda. "I refuse to sleep in a nameless place."

"Did the place where you used to live have a name?" asked Hinpoha, banteringlly.

"It certainly did 'have a name,'" replied Nyoda, with a twinkle in her eye. Gladys caught her eye and laughed. She was more in Nyoda's confidence than the rest of the girls.

"What was the name?" asked Betty.

"It was Peacock Plaza," said Nyoda, "painted on a gold sign over the door, where all who read could run."

"That wasn't what you called it," said Gladys.

"No, my beloved," returned Nyoda, "from the character and appearance of most of the inmates of the Widder Higgins' establishment, I have been moved to refer to it as 'The Rookery.'"

"Now," said Gladys sternly, when the laughter over this title had subsided, "tell the ladies the real reason why you had to seek a new boarding place so abruptly."

"I told you before," said Nyoda, "that my venturesome landlady went to the Exposition and left me out in the cold."

"That's not the real reason," said Gladys, severely. "If you don't tell it immediately, I will!"

"I'll tell it," said Nyoda submissively, alarmed at this threat. "You see, it was this way," she began in a pained, plaintive voice. "This Gladys woman over here came up to take supper with me last night—only she smelled the supper cooking in the kitchen and turned up her nose, whereupon I was moved with compassion to cook supper for her in my chafing-dish unbeknownst to the landlady, who has been known to frown on any attempts to compete with her table d'hôte."

"I never!" murmured Gladys. "She invited me to a chafing-dish supper in the first place."

"Well, as I was saying," continued Nyoda, not heeding this interruption, "to save her from starvation I dragged out my chafing-dish and made shrimp wiggle and creamed peas, and we had a dinner fit for a king, if I do say it as shouldn't. The crowning glory of the feast was a big onion which Gladys's delicate appetite required as a stimulant. All went merry as a marriage bell until it came to the disposal of that onion after the feast was over, as there was more than half of it left. We didn't dare take it down to the kitchen for fear the Widder would pounce on us for cooking in our rooms, and even my stout heart quailed at the thought of sleeping ferninst that fragrant vegetable. Suddenly I had an inspiration." Here Nyoda paused dramatically.

"Yes," broke in Gladys, impatient at her pause, "and she calmly chucked it out of the second story window into the street!"

"All would still have been mild and melodious," continued Nyoda, in a solemn tone which enthralled her hearers, "if it hadn't been for the fact that the fates had their fingers crossed at me last night. How otherwise could it have happened that at the exact moment when the onion descended the old bachelor missionary should have been prancing up the walk, coming to call on the Widder Higgins? Who but fate could have brought it about that that onion should bounce first on his hat, then on his nose, and then on his manly bosom?"

"And he never waited to see what hit him!" put in Gladys, for whom the recital was not going fast enough. "He ran as if he thought somebody had thrown a bomb at him."

"And the Widder Higgins was standing behind the lace curtain watching his approach with maidenly reserve," resumed Nyoda, "and so had a box seat view of the tragedy, and the last act of the drama was a moving one, I can assure you."

"Oh, Nyoda," cried Hinpoha and Sahwah and Migwan, pointing their fingers at her, "a nice person you are to be Guardian of the Winnebagos! Fine example you are setting your youthful flock! You need a guardian worse than any of us!"

"Do as you like with me," said Nyoda, covering her face with her hands in mock shame, whereupon Hinpoha and Migwan and Gladys fell upon her neck with one accord. 8

"But we haven't named this house yet," said Nyoda, uncovering her face and smoothing out her black hair.

"I thought of a name while you were telling about the onion," said Migwan. "It's Onoway House."

"What does that mean?" asked Nyoda.

"It's a symbolic word, like Wohelo," said Migwan. "It's made from the words, Only One Way. You see there was only one way of getting that money to go to college and that was by coming here."

"I think that is a very good name," said Nyoda. "It is clever as well as pretty. It sounds like the song, 'Onoway, awake beloved,' from Hiawatha's Wedding Feast."

"It sounds like the water going over the stones in the river," said romantic Hinpoha.

And so Onoway House was named.

CHAPTER II.—NEIGHBORS. 9

Onoway House stood on the Centerville Road, on a farm of about four acres. All of the land was not worked, just the part that was laid out as a garden and a small orchard of peach trees. The rest was open meadow running down to the river. It had originally been a much larger farm—Old Deacon Waterhouse's place—but after his death it had been divided up and sold in sections. Onoway House was the original home built by the deacon when he bought the farm as a young man. It was a very old place, large and rambling, and full of queer corners and passageways, and a big echoing cobwebby attic, crowded with old furniture and trunks. The house had been sold with all its furnishings at the Deacon's death, and the old things were still in the rooms when the Bartletts bought it twenty-five years later. This made it unnecessary for the Gardiners, when they came, to bring any of their own furniture. The Bartletts had never lived on the place, hiring a caretaker to work the garden, and it was the sudden departure of this man that had given Migwan her chance. 10

On either side of Onoway House was a farm of much larger proportions. To the right there stood a big, homelike looking farmhouse painted white, with porches and vines and a lawn in front running down to the road; on the left was a smaller house, painted dark red, with a vegetable bed in front. The garden at Onoway House had been given a good start and the strawberries and asparagus and sundry other vegetables were ready to market when Migwan took possession. The Winnebagos looked on the gardening as a grand lark and pitched in with a will to help Migwan make her fortune from the ground.

"Did you ever see anything half so delicate as this little new pea-vine?" asked Migwan, pattering happily over one of the long beds.

"Or anything half so indelicate as this plantain bush?" asked Nyoda, busily grubbing weeds. "'Scarce reared above the parent earth thy tender form,'" she quoted, "'and yet with a root three times as long as the hair of Claire de Lorme!'"

"Burns would relish hearing that line of his applied to weeds," said Migwan, laughing. "I wonder what he would have written if he had turned up a plantain weed with his plough instead of a mountain daisy."

"He wouldn't have turned up a plantain weed," said Nyoda, with a vicious thrust of the long knife with which she was weeding, "it would have turned him up." 11

Migwan rose from the ground slowly and painfully. "Oh dear," she sighed, "I wonder if Burns ever got as stiff in the joints from close contact with Nature as I am?"

"He certainly must have," observed Nyoda, straining her muscles to uproot the weedy homesteader, "haven't you ever heard the slogan, 'Omega Oil for Burns?'"

Migwan laughed as she straightened up and held her aching back. "Earth gets its price for what earth gives us," she quoted, with a mixture of ruefulness and humor.

"Listen to the poetry floating around on the breeze," cried Sahwah, passing them as she ran the wheel hoe up and down between the rows of plants.

"Come and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic *hoe*,"

she sang. "Oh, I say," she called over her shoulder, "do I have to hoe up the surface of the river around the watercress, too?"

"You certainly do," said Nyoda gravely, "and while you're at it just loosen up the air around that air fern of Mrs. Gardiner's." Sahwah made a grimace and trundled off with her wheel hoe.

"Are you looking for any field hands?" called a cheery voice. The girls looked up to see a white-haired, pleasant-faced old man of about seventy years standing in the garden. "My name's Landsdowne, Farmer Landsdowne," he said by way of introduction, with a friendly smile, which included all the girls at once, "and I've come to have a look at the new caretaker." 12

"I'm the one," said Migwan, stepping forward. "My name is Gardiner, and I *am* a gardener just now."

"And are all these your sisters?" asked Farmer Landsdowne, quizzically. Migwan laughed and introduced the girls in turn. They all liked Farmer Landsdowne immediately. He walked up and down among the rows of vegetables, and gave Migwan quantities of advice about soil cultivation, insects and diseases and various other things pertaining to gardening, for which she thanked him heartily. "Come over and see us," he said hospitably, as he took his departure, "I live there," and he pointed to the friendly looking white house on the right of Onoway House.

"Isn't he a dear?" said Gladys, when he was gone. "I'm glad he's our next door neighbor. What do you suppose the people on the other side are like?"

"Red isn't nearly so pretty as white," said Hinpoha, squinting at the bare looking house to the left of them. As they looked a man came along the edge of the land on which the red house stood. When he reached the fence which separated the two farms he stood still for a few minutes looking hard at Onoway House; then, seeing that the girls were looking in his direction he turned and went back to the house. 13

The strawberries were ready to pick the first week that the girls were at Onoway House, and Migwan had an idea about marketing them. She gave each picker two baskets with instructions to put only the largest and finest in one and the medium-sized and small ones in the other.

"What are you going to take them to town in?" asked Gladys. Although there was a large barn on the place there were no horses, for Mr. Mitchell, the last caretaker, had owned his own horse and taken it away with him when he left.

"I'll have to hire one from some of the neighbors," said Migwan. Mr. Landsdowne, when interviewed, would have been extremely glad to let them take a horse and wagon, but this was a busy time and one of his teams was sick so none could be spared. Feeling considerably more shy than she had when she went to Mr. Landsdowne, Migwan went over to the red house. As she went around the path to the back door she heard sounds of loud talking in a man's voice, which ceased as she came up on the porch. A red faced man, (he almost matched the house, thought Migwan) came to the door. "I am your new neighbor, Elsie Gardiner," said Migwan, "and I wonder if I could hire a horse and wagon from you three times a week to take my vegetables to town." 14

"So you've come to live on the place, have you?" said the man. "How long are you going to stay?"

"All summer," replied Migwan. She was not drawn to this man as she was to Farmer Landsdowne. There was something about him that seemed to repel her, although she could not have told what it was.

"Yes, I can let you have a horse and wagon," he said, after a moment. "When do you want it?"

"In about an hour," said Migwan.

"I'll send it over," said the master of the red house. "My name's Smalley, Abner Smalley," he said, as she took her leave.

In an hour the horse was at the door. It was brought over by a pleasant-faced, light-haired lad of about seventeen, who introduced himself as Calvin Smalley.

"You don't look a bit like your father," said Migwan.

"That's not my father," said Calvin, "that's my uncle. My father's dead. He was Uncle Abner's brother. I live with Uncle Abner and Aunt Maggie. But the farm's really mine," he said proudly, as though he did not want anyone to think he was living on charity even though he was an orphan, "for Grandfather willed it to Father. Uncle Abner's holding it in trust for me until I'm of age." 15

There was something so frank and manly about him that the girls liked him at once. But if Calvin Smalley made such a good impression, the horse which he had brought over for the girls to drive

to town was less fortunate. He was a hoary, moth-eaten looking creature that might easily have been the first white horse born west of the Mississippi. In looking at him you would be left with a lingering doubt in your mind as to whether he had originally been white or had turned white with age. He tottered so that each step threatened to be his last. The wagon to which he was fastened with a patched and rotten harness had probably been on the scene some years before he was born. Migwan was much taken aback when she inspected him. "I wouldn't dare attempt to drive that beast all the way to town," she thought to herself. "He'd never get beyond the first bend in the road. And if he did make it he'd go so slowly that my berries would be out of season before I got to my customers."

"Isn't he rather—old?" she said, aloud. "I'm afraid he isn't able to work much."

Calvin blushed fiery red and his eyes sought the ground in distress. "It's a shame," he said, fiercely, "to try to hire out such a horse. I don't blame you for not wanting it." Without another word he climbed into the wagon and urged the feeble horse back to his home pasture.

"Didn't you feel sorry for that poor boy?" said Migwan. "He felt ashamed clear down to his shoes at having to bring that old wreck of a horse over. I should have died if I had been in his place. He's such a nice looking boy, too. I suppose his uncle is one of those stingy, grasping farmers who work everybody to death on the place. Anybody who plants vegetables in his front yard must be stingy. That horse probably couldn't work on the farm any more so he thought he would make some money out of it by hiring it to us. He must have thought girls didn't know a horse when they saw one. I didn't exactly fall in love with Mr. Smalley when I went over. He wasn't a bit friendly like Mr. Landsdowne."

"I foresee where we will have little to do with our neighbors in the Red House," said Sahwah. "I'm sorry, because I like to have lots of people to visit, and like to have them running in at odd times, the way Mr. Landsdowne appeared."

"Let's not have any hard feelings against Calvin Smalley, though," said Migwan. "He isn't to blame for his uncle's stinginess. I dare say he isn't very happy over there. Let's have him over as often as we can."

"Spoken like a true Winnebago," said Nyoda, approvingly.

"But in the meantime," said Migwan, in perplexity, "what are we going to do for a horse and wagon to take our things to town?"

"Why not use our car?" said Gladys. The machine she had come in was still in the barn at Onoway House. "It's a good thing I learned to run the big one—father said I might use it all summer if I would be a good girl and stay at home when they went out west."

"Could we get everything in?" asked Migwan.

"I think so," said Gladys, "if we arrange them carefully." The berries and asparagus were loaded into the back of the machine and Gladys and Migwan drove off.

"What shall we do now, Nyoda?" asked Hinpoha, after the two girls were gone.

"I know what I'm going to do," said Nyoda, moving in the direction of her bedroom. "Now," she said, as she threw herself on the bed with a great yawn and stretch, "if anyone asks you what kind of a farmer I am you may tell them that I'm a retired one!" Nyoda had been up since four o'clock that morning, and was unused to such early rising. Hinpoha drew down the shade to shut out the strong sunlight and tiptoed from the room.

Gladys and Migwan stopped first at a large grocery store to inquire the prices of strawberries and asparagus. The proprietor offered to buy the whole load, but they would not sell, as they could get more for them by peddling them at retail prices. Migwan examined the berries in the store, and mentally fixed her middle grade berries at the same price with them, and her finest grade ones at three cents higher.

"I've an idea," said Gladys, "that some of mother's friends would take the berries at our own price." Thus it was that Mrs. Davis, whose speculations about the financial standing of the Evans family had resulted in Gladys's mother giving her such an elaborate party the winter before, was surprised by a call from Gladys at ten o'clock in the morning.

"Ah, good morning, my dear," she said effusively, seating Gladys in the parlor, "you have come to spend the day, I hope? Caroline is not up yet—she was out late last night—but I shall make her get up right away."

"Please don't call Caroline," said Gladys, "it's you I came to see."

"Oh, yes," purred Mrs. Davis, "a message from your mother, I see."

Gladys came to the point directly. "Have you canned your strawberries yet, Mrs. Davis?"

"No," replied Mrs. Davis, a little puzzled by the question.

"Would you like to buy some extra fine ones?" continued Gladys.

"Why, yes, I suppose so," said Mrs. Davis, "who has any for sale?"

"I have," said Gladys, "right out here in the machine." Mrs. Davis bought the whole eight quarts of large berries, paying fifteen cents a quart straight, and ordered another eight quarts as soon as they should be ripe. She also took two bunches of asparagus.

"Whatever are you doing, Gladys Evans?" she asked, curiously. "Peddling berries?"

Gladys laughed at her evident mystification, and tingled with a desire to keep her guessing. "We decided that I had better work this summer," she said, gravely, "so I am peddling berries for a friend of ours who is a farmer. We will have to go on a farm ourselves, father said, if things to eat get much dearer, so I am getting the practice. Wouldn't you like to be a regular customer, and have me bring you fresh vegetables and fruit three times a week all through the summer?"

"Why, yes," stammered Mrs. Davis in a daze, "of course, certainly."

"All right, then," said Gladys, "I'll put you down." She drove off in high glee, and Mrs. Davis went into the house with a knowing smile on her face. So the Evanses were losing money after all, and Gladys was working this summer instead of traveling. Poor Gladys! She flew up-stairs to communicate the news to her energetic daughter Caroline who was just beginning to think about getting up. "I do feel so sorry for poor Gladys," she said. "You must be very kind to her whenever you meet her."

The rest of the berries and vegetables were disposed of to other friends of Gladys's and Migwan's, all for topnotch prices, and there were at least half a dozen names in the little note book when they started homeward, of people who wanted to be supplied regularly. To some of her friends Gladys told frankly whose fruit she was selling, and enlisted their sympathies in the enterprise, while to others, like the Davises and the Joneses, who were thorough snobs, she could not resist pretending that she was actually working for a farmer to earn money. She could not remember when she had enjoyed anything so much as the expressions on the various faces when she made her little speech at the door and offered her basket of fruit for inspection. "Wait until I tell dad about it," she chuckled to Migwan.

When they returned to Onoway House they found that during their absence the girls, with the help of Mr. Landsdowne, had constructed a raft about seven feet square, which they were setting afloat on the river. "Oh, what fun!" cried Migwan when she saw it. "We needed another rapid vessel to go boating in. There's only one rowboat and we could never all go out at once. What shall we call it?"

"Let's name it the Tortoise," said Hinpoha, "and call the rowboat the Hare."

"Oh, no," said Sahwah, "let's call it the Crab, because it travels sort of sidewise." Hinpoha held out for her name and Sahwah would not yield hers.

"Contest of arms!" cried Nyoda. "Decide the question by a test of physical prowess. Whichever one of you can pole the raft straight across the river and back again without mishap in the shortest time may have the privilege of naming it. Is that fair?"

"It is!" cried all the girls. Hinpoha and Sahwah, dressed in their bathing-suits, prepared for the contest. Hinpoha had the first trial because she had spoken first. Getting onto the raft and seizing the stout pole, she pushed off from the shore. It was difficult to keep the unwieldy craft going toward the opposite bank, because it had a strong inclination to be carried down-stream with the current. Halfway across she grounded on a rock and stood marooned. Sahwah watched the moments tick off on Nyoda's watch with ill-concealed delight while Hinpoha pushed and strained on the pole to set the raft free. Finally she leaned all her weight, which was no small item, on the pole and shoved with her feet against the raft. It freed itself and glided away under her feet, leaving her clinging to the pole in the middle of the river, while her solid footing of a few moments ago swung into the current and floated off beyond her reach. She looked so comical clinging to the pole, which was fast losing its upright position under her weight, that the girls were unable to help her for laughter, and a minute later she plunged into the river with a mighty splash and swam disgustedly to shore.

"Our new boat will not be called the TORTOISE, it seems," said Nyoda. "Cheer up, Hinpoha, you have made yourself more immortal by the picture you presented hanging over the water than you would have by naming the raft. As Hinpoha, the Polehanger, you will have your portrait in the Winnebago Hall of Fame. Now then, Sahwah, show her how it should be done."

Sahwah, ever more skilful in watercraft than Hinpoha, poled the raft neatly across the stream to the opposite shore, paused a moment to see that the feat was properly registered by the judges, and then started back. Unlike Hinpoha, who forged blindly ahead, she felt carefully with her pole to locate the points of the rocks and then avoided them. "Here I come," she hailed, when she was nearly back to the starting point, "on my new raft, the CRAB." Striking a heroic attitude with arms crossed and one foot out ahead of the other she stepped to the edge of the raft, when the floating floor tipped under her weight and she lost her balance and fell head first into the water. The raft, released from her guiding hand, went off with the current as it had done before. The look of stupefaction on her face when she came up out of the water was even funnier than the sight of Hinpoha marooned on the pole.

"The raft will not be named the CRAB, either, it seems," said Nyoda.

"I don't care what it's called," said Sahwah, her temper up, "I'm going to pole that raft across the river."

"So'm I," said Hinpoha, her eye gleaming with resolution.

"Let's do it together," said Sahwah.

Thanks to Sahwah's skill with the pole and Hinpoha's judicious balancing of the raft at the right places, they made the trip over and back without mishap.

"Two heads are better than one," said Sahwah, as they landed, "what neither of us could do alone

we can do in combination.”

“Then why not combine the names?” said Nyoda. “You have each won equal rights in the contest.”

“Good idea,” said Sahwah. “We couldn’t find a better one than the Tortoise-Crab.” So the name was painted across the floor of the raft, this being the only space big enough.

Delighted with their new sport, the girls spent the whole evening on the river, all five Winnebagoes and Betty and Tom on the raft at once, floating down-stream with the current and being towed up again by the rowboat. It was bright moonlight, and the air was full of romance. At one place along the riverbank there stood a high rock, grey on the moonlit side and black on the other. “It reminds me of the Lorelei Rock,” said Nyoda.

“Let’s play Lorelei,” said Sahwah.

“What do you mean?” asked Nyoda.

“Why,” answered Sahwah, “let Hinpoha climb up on the rock and comb her hair and sing, and we come along on the raft and listen to her song and run into the rock and upset. We want to go swimming before we go to bed anyhow.”

“I can’t sing,” objected Hinpoha.

“That doesn’t make any difference,” said Sahwah, “sing anyway.”

So Hinpoha mounted the moonlit rock and shook her long, red hair down over her shoulders, combing it out with her sidecomb and singing “Fairy Moonlight,” while the raft floated lazily down-stream toward the base of the cliff, its passengers sitting in attitudes of enraptured listening, and pointing ecstatically to the figure silhouetted against the moon. Sahwah adroitly steered the raft toward the rock and it struck with a great jar. It disobligingly kept its balance, however, and refused to upset. Sahwah deliberately rolled off the edge, tipping it as she did so, and the rest went off on all sides, giggling and splashing in the water. Hinpoha on the rock above wrung her hands in mock horror at the effect of her song. That instant a figure came running at top speed along the river bank. “I’ll save you, girls,” he shouted, jumping into the water with all his clothes on. Catching hold of Migwan, who was hanging on to the raft, he pulled her out of the water and set her on the shore. It was Calvin Smalley, their neighbor from the Red House.

“Oh,” gasped Migwan, trying not to laugh at him, “I thank you ever so much, but we’re not really drowning. We upset the raft on purpose.”

“Upset it on purpose!” said Calvin, in astonishment.

“Yes,” answered Migwan, “we were playing Lorelei, you know.”

Then Calvin noticed for the first time that the victims of the upset were all dressed in bathing-suits, and that they seemed to be very much at home in the water. “It looked like a dreadful smashup,” he said, “and I forgot that the river isn’t very deep here. Do you generally play such quiet games?”

“Sometimes we play much more quiet ones,” said Sahwah meaningly.

“It was too bad to frighten you so,” said Nyoda. “We’ll have to warn spectators the next time we do anything. We’ll have to have a flag that says ‘Stunt coming; look out for the splash!’ and whoever runs may read.” At this moment Hinpoha jumped from the rock, out into the middle of the stream, where it was deep, swam under water toward the bank, and came up suddenly beside Calvin so that he was quite startled.

“Say,” he said, looking around at the group of girls who were doing various astonishing things, “do you belong to the circus?”

The girls laughed at this inquiry. “Oh, no,” said Migwan, “we are only Camp Fire Girls.”

“Camp Fire Girls?” said Calvin. “I’ve heard of them, but I never knew any. Is that why you call each other by such funny names?”

“Yes,” answered Migwan, and she told him their names and their meanings.

“It must be great fun to be a Camp Fire Girl,” said Calvin thoughtfully.

“Come for a ride on the raft with us,” said Migwan, “we are going back now. We aren’t going to upset again,” she added reassuringly, “and if we did you couldn’t get any wetter.” Calvin smiled at the pleasantry, but said he must be going in. He was on his way home when he saw the raft upset. The Lorelei Rock was just on the other side of the Smalley farm. He bade them a friendly good-night, promising to come over to Onoway House soon, and took his way home across the fields.

“What a nice boy he is,” said Migwan. “He wasn’t a bit cross when he found that the joke was on him, as some would have been.”

Migwan woke up in the night and could not go to sleep again immediately. As she lay smiling to herself about the fun they had had with the raft that evening, she heard a sound as of something dropped on the attic floor above her room, followed by a faint creaking as of someone walking over bare boards. She clutched Hinpoha’s arm and woke her up. “There’s someone in the attic,” she whispered. Hinpoha yawned.

“I don’t hear anything,” she said.

"There it is again," said Migwan, "listen." Again there came a faint creak, accompanied by a far-away rustle as of crinkling paper.

"It's mice," said Hinpoha, "or maybe rats. They get between the walls and make noises that way."

Migwan breathed a sigh of relief and composed herself to slumber again. "I suppose these dreadfully old houses are just overrun with things of that kind," she said. "But for a moment it did give me a scare."

CHAPTER III.—OPHELIA.

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"They've come! They've come!" shrieked Migwan, running into the dining-room where the rest of the family were peacefully finishing their breakfast.

"Who've come?" said Nyoda, excitedly, "the Mexicans?"

"The bean weevils," said Migwan, tragically. "Mr. Landsdowne said to watch out for them, although they were hardly ever found up north, but they're here. He just found a bush with them on."

"To arms!" cried Sahwah, springing up. "The Flying Column to the rescue!

"Forward the Bug Brigade,
Is there a leaf unsprayed?"—

Here she tripped over the carpet and her Amazonian shout came to an abrupt end.

"Where are the weevils?" she asked, when they had all gathered around the bean patch.

"On here," said Migwan, indicating a hill of beans.

"Oh," said Sahwah, in a disappointed tone.

"Where did you think they were?" asked Migwan.

"From the noise you were making," said Sahwah, "I expected to find them drawn up in battle lines, waiting to charge the garden with fixed bayonets."

"They'll do just as much damage as if they had bayonets," remarked Farmer Landsdowne.

"Do be cautious in approaching such deadly foes," said Sahwah in a tone of mock anxiety, as Migwan came along with the sprayer, "take careful aim, and don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."

"I'll spray you in a minute if you don't keep still," said Migwan.

"What must it feel like to be a weevil," said Gladys, musingly, "and be hunted down remorselessly wherever you went?"

"Gladys has gone over to the side of the enemy," said Sahwah, teasingly. "There is the subject for your next book, Migwan, 'Won by a Weevil', by the author of 'Enthralled by a Thrip'! It must have been weevils Tennyson meant when he wrote 'The Lotus Eaters.'"

"Battle over?" asked Hinpoha, as Migwan laid down the sprayer. "Then let's celebrate the victory. Cheer the bean crop." To the tune of "We will, We will Cheer," they sang,

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"Weevil, weevil, weevil, weevil,
Weevil cheer our bean crop,
Weevil, weevil, weevil, weevil,
Weevil cheer our bean crop,
Weevil cheer our bean crop,
Weevil cheer our bean crop,
Weevil cheer our bean crop,
Weevil cheer our bean crop, O!"

"Don't crow too soon," said Farmer Landsdowne, picking up his sprayer preparatory to taking his departure, "there may be twice as many on to-morrow."

"I flatly refuse to worry about to-morrow," said Nyoda, "'sufficient unto the day is the weevil thereof!'"

Calvin Smalley, working in the vegetable patch in front of the Red House, heard that cheer and paused in his work to look over at the other garden. He was wondering what was so funny about gardening. "I wish," he sighed, as he turned back to his endless task, "that those girls were my sisters!"

Gladys went into town alone when the last of the strawberries were ripe, for none of the other girls could be spared that day. The squash bugs had descended on the garden and all hands were required on deck to save the squash and melon vines from being eaten alive. On the way she passed Mr. Smalley, driving the identical wreck of a horse he had tried to hire out to the girls. He had a heavy load of vegetables, and the poor, broken down creature would hardly move it from the spot. He started nervously as the machine passed him on the narrow road, and Mr. Smalley pulled him up sharply and brought the whip down on his back with a heavy cut. "Ain't you used to

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automobiles yet, you stupid brute?" he growled.

Gladys delivered the eight quarts of extra large berries to Mrs. Davis first. "Wouldn't you like to stay in town and have lunch with us and go to the theatre afterward?" Mrs. Davis said in such a patronizing tone that Gladys quite started, and then laughed inwardly.

"I'm sorry, but I haven't sold all of my berries yet," she answered soberly, "and I have to hurry back and help pick bugs."

"Pick bugs?" exclaimed Mrs. Davis, in a horrified tone.

"Yes," said Gladys, with a relish, "nice juicy, striped bugs that crunch beautifully when you step on them."

"Oh, oh," said Mrs. Davis, putting her hands over her ears. "Give my love to your poor, dear mamma," she said gushingly, when Gladys was departing. "Tell her she has my fullest sympathy." As Gladys's poor, dear mamma was, at that moment, seated on the observation platform of a luxurious railway coach, speeding through the mountains of Washington while Mrs. Davis was obliged to stay in town for the time being, she was not really in as much need of Mrs. Davis's sympathy as that lady fondly imagined. 32

Gladys disposed of the remaining berries to other amused or patronizing friends, and then decided to look up a laundress she knew of and get her to come out to Onoway House once in a while to do the heavy washing. The street where the laundress lived was narrow and crowded with children playing in the middle of the road, and progress was rather slow. One little girl in particular made Gladys extremely nervous by running across the street right in front of the machine and daring her to run over her, shaking her fists at her and making horrible grimaces. She got across the street once in safety and then started back again. Just then a small child sprang up from the ground right under the very wheels of the machine and Gladys turned sharply to one side. The fender struck the saucy little girl who was daring her to run over her and she rolled under the car, screaming. Gladys jammed down the emergency brake with a jerk that almost wrenched the machinery of the automobile asunder. White as a sheet she jumped out and picked the girl up. In an instant an angry crowd of women and children had surrounded the machine. "Darn yer!" cried the child shrilly, shaking a dirty fist in Gladys's face, while the other arm hung limp. "I thought yer didn't dast run into me." 33

"Get into the car," said Gladys, terrified, "and I'll take you home."

"I dassent go home," shrieked the child, "Old Grady'll lick the tar out of me if I go home without sellin' me papers."

"Then let me take you to the hospital, or somewhere," said Gladys, anxious to get away from the threatening crowd.

"What's the matter?" asked one voice after another, as the tenements poured their human contents into the street.

"Ophelia's run over," explained a powerful Irish woman, with a shawl over her head, who kept her hand on the handle of the car door. "Lady speedin' run her down like a dog." An angry murmur rose from the crowd. Gladys shook in her shoes and wondered if she dared start the car with all those children hanging on the front of it. She looked around helplessly for someone who would help her out of her difficulty. Just then a policeman turned into the street, attracted by the crowd.

"Cheese it, de cop!" screamed a ragged gamin, who stood on the step of the car, and the women and children began to slink into the doorways. Gladys waited until he came up, and then explained the whole matter and asked where the nearest hospital was.

"Can't blame you for hitting that brat," said the policeman, "she's the terror of drivers for two blocks." Ophelia stuck out her tongue at him. Gladys drove her to the hospital where it was discovered that the left arm was broken below the elbow. Painful as the setting may have been there was "never a whang out of her," as the doctor remarked, although she hung on tightly to Gladys's white sleeve with her dirty hand. Her waist was taken off to find the extent of the damage, and Gladys was frightened to see that the other arm was fearfully bruised and scratched, and there was a ring of purple and green blotches around her neck like a collar. 34

"She must have been thrown down harder than I thought," said Gladys to the nurse.

"Thrown down nothin'," answered Ophelia, "Old Grady did that the other day when I threw a stone through the winder." And she held up the mottled arm where all might see.

"Oh," said Gladys, with a shudder, "cover it up." Putting Ophelia into the machine again she drove back to the scene of the accident and entered the squalid tenement in which the child said she lived.

"Won't Old Grady beat me up though, when she finds I've busted me wing," said Ophelia, as they mounted the rickety stairs. Hardly had she spoken when the door at the head of the stairs flew open and a large, red-faced, coarse-looking woman strode out and shook her fist over the banisters.

"I'll fix ye fer stayin' out afther I tell ye ter come in, ye little devil," she shouted. "I'll break every bone in yer body. Gimme the money for the papers first." 35

"Go chase yerself," said Ophelia, standing still on the stairs with a spiteful gleam in her eye, "there ain't no money. I ain't had time ter peddle this afternoon."

"What yer mean, no money?" screamed the woman. "Just wait till I get me hands on yer!"

Gladys shrank back against the wall in terror, then collecting herself she thrust Ophelia behind her and faced the angry woman. "Ophelia has had an accident," she explained. "I ran over her with my machine and broke her arm." The woman brushed past her and grabbed Ophelia by the shoulder. Overcome with fury at the thought that her household drudge would be of no use to her for several weeks, she boxed her ears again and again, calling her every name she could think of. Finally she let go of her with a push that sent Ophelia stumbling down half a dozen stairs.

"Get out o' my sight!" she shrieked. "Do yer think I'm going ter house an' feed a worthless brat that ain't doin' nothin' fer her keep? Get out an' live in the streets yer like ter play in so well!" With a final exclamation she strode back into the room and slammed the door after her. Ophelia picked herself up from the step, shaking her one useful fist at the closed door at the head of the stairs.

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Gladys was inexpressibly shocked at this heartless treatment of an injured child. "Come—come home with me," she said faintly. Seated beside her in the big car, Ophelia ran out her tongue and made faces at the jeering children who watched her ride away.

"This is the life!" she exclaimed, as she settled herself comfortably in the cushioned seat. People in the streets turned to stare at the dirty little ragamuffin riding beside the daintily gowned young girl, shouting saucily at the passers-by, or making jeering remarks in a voice audible above the noise of traffic.

The girls were all out in front watching for her as Gladys drove up. It was past supper time and they were wondering what had become of her. What a chorus of surprised exclamations arose when Ophelia was set down in their midst! Gladys explained the situation briefly and asked Migwan if they could not keep her there awhile. Migwan consented hospitably and went off to find a place for her to sleep, while Gladys proceeded to wash the accumulated layers of dirt from Ophelia's face and divest her of her spotted rags. She came to the table in a kimono of Gladys's, for there were no clothes in the house that would fit her. She was nine years old, she said, but small and thin for her age, with arms and legs like pipe-stems which fairly made one shiver to look at. She had a little, pinched, sharp featured face, cunning with the knowledge of the world gained from her life on the streets, big grey-green eyes filled with dancing lights, and black hair that tumbled around her face in tangled curls, which Gladys was not able to smooth out in her hasty going over before supper.

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Not in the least shy in her new surroundings, nor complaining of discomfort from the broken arm, she sat at the table and kept up a cheerful stream of talk, racy with slang and the idiom of the streets. Hinpoha was instantly dubbed "Firetop." "Is it red inside of yer head?" she asked, after gazing steadfastly at Hinpoha's hair for several minutes. To all questions about her father and mother she shrugged her shoulders. "Ain't never had any," she replied. "I was born in the Orphan Asylum. Old Grady got me there." Here a spasm of rage distorted her face at the remembrance of Old Grady's ministrations, followed by a wicked chuckle when she thought how that tender guardian's plan for turning her out homeless into the street had been frustrated by this lucky stroke of fate. What her last name was she did not know. "I guess I never had one," she said cheerfully. "I'm just Ophelia." Gladys was much distressed because she would not drink milk. "No," she said, shoving it away, "that's for the babies. Gimme coffee or nothin'." Disdaining the aid of fork or spoon, she conveyed her food to her mouth with her fingers. "Say," she said, after staring fixedly at Nyoda in a disconcerting way she had, "are yer teeth false?"

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"Certainly not!" said Nyoda indignantly. "What made you think so?"

"They're so white and even," said Ophelia. "Nobody ever had such teeth of their own."

"Did you bleach yer hair?" she asked next, turning her attention to Gladys's pale gold locks. Gladys merely laughed.

Ophelia waxed more loquacious as she filled up on the good things on the table. "Did yer husband leave yer?" she inquired sociably of Mrs. Gardiner. Gladys rose hastily and bore Ophelia away to her room, where a cot had been set up for her.

"Three flies in the spider's parlor," said Migwan.

"And one in the ointment, or my prophetic soul has its signals crossed," said Nyoda.

CHAPTER IV.—THE MEDICINE LODGE.

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Nyoda's prophetic soul proved to be a true prophet, and there were trying times to follow the establishment of Ophelia at Onoway House. That very first night Nyoda woke with a strangling sensation to find Ophelia sitting on her chest. "I want ter sleep in the bed wid yer," she said, in answer to Nyoda's startled inquiry. "I'm afraid ter sleep alone." She had been trying to creep in between Nyoda and Gladys and lost her balance, which accounted for her position when Nyoda woke up.

"But there's nothing in the room to hurt you," Nyoda said, reassuringly.

"It's them hop-toads," she wailed, stopping her ears against the pillow, "they give me th' pip with

their everlastin' screechin'. They sound right under the bed." Gladys woke up in time to hear her and offered to take the cot herself and let Ophelia sleep with Nyoda.

The next morning Gladys made a hurried trip to town to buy Ophelia some clothes, while Nyoda washed her hair, much to Ophelia's disgust. The curls were so matted that it was impossible to comb them out and there was nothing left to do but cut them short. When all the foreign coloring matter had been removed and the hair had begun to dry in the warm wind, Nyoda stopped beside her in bewildered astonishment. On the top of her head, just about in the center, there was a circular patch of light hair about three inches in diameter. All the rest was black. "Ophelia," said Nyoda, looking her straight in the eyes, "how did you bleach the top of your hair?"

"It's a fib," said Ophelia, politely, "I never bleached it."

"Then somebody did," said Nyoda.

"Didn't neither," contradicted Ophelia.

"We'll see whether they did or not," said Nyoda, "when the hair grows out from the roots."

Dressed in the pretty clothes Gladys bought for her she was not at all a bad looking child, but her language and her knowledge of evil absolutely appalled the dwellers at Onoway House. "Did yer old man beat yer up?" she asked sympathetically of Mrs. Landsdowne, when that gentle lady came to call. Mrs. Landsdowne had run into the barn door the day before and had a bruise on her forehead.

Ophelia's sins in the garden were too numerous to chronicle. When set to weeding she pulled weeds and plants impartially, working such havoc in a short time that she was forbidden to touch a single growing thing. Her ignorance of everything pertaining to the country was only equalled by her curiosity.

"What would happen to the cow if you didn't milk her?" she demanded of Farmer Landsdowne, as she watched him milking one day. "She'd bust, I suppose," she went on, answering her own question while Farmer Landsdowne was scratching his head for a reply. "Say, are yer whiskers fireproof?" she asked, scrutinizing his white beard with interest. "Because if they ain't yer don't dast smoke that pipe. The Santa Claus in Lefkovitz's window told me so. Say, what do you do when they get dirty?"

Leaving her alone in the barn for a few moments he heard a mighty squawking and cackling and hastened to investigate. He found the old setting hen running distractedly around one of the empty horse stalls, frantically trying to get out, while Ophelia was holding the big rooster on the nest with her one hand, in spite of the fact that he was flapping his wings and pecking at her furiously. "He ought to do some of the settin'," she remarked, when taken to task for her act, "he ain't doin' nothin' fer a livin'."

The squash bugs had descended once more, and were making hay of the squash bed while the sun shone, and the girls worked a whole, long weary afternoon clearing the vines. As the bugs were picked off they were put into tin cans to be destroyed. Tired to death and heartily sick of handling the disagreeable insects the girls quit the job at sundown, having just about cleared the patch. They gathered in Migwan's big room before supper to make some plans for the Winnebago Ceremonial Meeting which was to be held at Onoway House on the Fourth of July. Ophelia promptly followed them and demanded admittance. "You can't come in," said Migwan rather crossly, for there were secrets being told which they did not want her to hear.

Ophelia wandered off in search of amusement. Mr. Bob had fled at her approach and was hiding under the porch, and Betty had been admitted to the council of the Winnebagos, for Migwan and Nyoda had decided at the beginning of the summer that if there was to be any peace with her she would have to be a party to all their doings, and as she was to be put into a Camp Fire Group in the fall she was given this opportunity of learning to qualify for the various honors by watching the intimate workings of the Winnebago group. Tom was over at the Landsdowne's and Mrs. Gardiner was getting supper and invited Ophelia to stay out of the kitchen when she came down to see if there was any fun to be had there. Ophelia had been allowed to help once or twice and had broken so many dishes with her one-handed way of doing things that Mrs. Gardiner lost all patience and refused to have her around.

Strolling out into the garden in her quest for something to do she came upon the big tin pail containing all the squash bugs, which Migwan intended taking over to Farmer Landsdowne for disposal. A mischievous impulse seized her, and taking off the cover she emptied the bugs back into the bed, where they crawled eagerly back to their interrupted feast of tender leaves. When the prank was discovered Migwan sank wearily down beside the patch she had tried so hard to save from destruction. "Whatever possessed you?" said Nyoda, seizing Ophelia with the firm determination of boxing her ears. But Ophelia shrank back with such evident expectation of a blow that Nyoda loosened her hold.

"Well, ain't yer goin' ter punish me?" asked Ophelia, still eyeing her warily for an unexpected attack, with the attitude of an animal at bay. To her surprise there were no blows forthcoming, but she was ordered to pick off all the squash bugs again, and before the job was done she had plenty of time to regret her rash act. All that beautiful long summer evening, when the girls were on the front porch playing games and shouting with laughter, she sat in the squash bed, undoing the mischief she had done. When bed time came she was told to sleep in the cot by herself, and Gladys and Nyoda took no notice of her at all, whispering secrets to each other in bed with never a word to her. The next morning she was awakened at four o'clock and set to work again, and so

missed the merry breakfast with the family. Gladys had promised to take her to town in the machine that day, but, of course, this pleasure was forfeited, as the beetles were not yet all picked off. The family was all invited over to the Landsdowne's for supper that night, but by four o'clock Ophelia realized with a pang of disappointment that she would not even be through by five. Accustomed as she was to brutal treatment, this was the worst punishment she had ever experienced, but she realized that she deserved it and was gamely paying the price without a murmur. When Migwan came out shortly after four and helped her so that she would be done in time to go to Farmer Landsdowne's with the others her penitence was complete.

Preparations for the big Fourth of July Council meeting were going forward apace. It was to be a house party, they decided, and the other three Winnebagos, Nakwisi, Chapa and Medmangi, were to be invited to spend the night. Sleeping quarters caused some debate, when Sahwah had a brilliant idea. "Let's build a tepee," she said, "and all sleep on the ground inside of it with our feet toward the center. Then we can hold the Council Fire in there and dance a war dance around the fire and make shadows on the sides to scare the natives." No sooner said than begun. The front lawn was chosen as the site of the tepee, as that was the only spot big enough. Dick, Tom and Mr. Landsdowne set the poles in a circle to make the supporting framework, and the girls made the covering of heavy sail cloth, which fitted snugly over the poles and had an opening in the center of the top, and another one lower down for the entrance. When done it would easily accommodate fifteen or sixteen persons. An iron kettle was sunk into the ground in the center of the tepee. This would hold sticks of wood soaked in kerosene, which is the secret of a quickly lighted council fire, and also the alcohol and salt mixture which is an indispensable part of all ghost story telling parties. The grass around the kettle was pulled up, leaving a ring of bare earth, which would prevent accident from the fire spreading.

The whole thing was completed two days before the Fourth. A big sign, WINNEBAGO MEDICINE LODGE, was hung over the entrance. Underneath it a sign in smaller letters proclaimed that at the Fourth Sundown of the Thunder Moon the big medicine man Face-Toward-the-Mountain would "make medicine" in the lodge for the benefit of the Winnebago tribe and their paleface friends. The "paleface friends" referred to were Mrs. Gardiner, Betty and Tom and Ophelia, Mr. and Mrs. Landsdowne and Calvin Smalley, who were invited to see the show.

"It's a shame Aunt Phoebe and the Doctor have to miss it," said Hinpoha.

It was rumored that a real Indian princess would be present at the medicine making, i.e., Sahwah in her Indian dress that Mr. Evans had sent her from Canada, and excitement ran high among the invited guests as hint after hint trickled out as to the elaborateness of the ceremonial, which was to eclipse anything yet attempted in that line by the Winnebagos, which was saying a great deal. Migwan had been seen doing a great deal of surreptitious writing of late and at bed time the Winnebagos had taken to congregating in the big, back bedroom and locking the doors, and soon there would issue forth sounds of much talking and laughter, so that a really experienced listener would almost suspect there was a play in process of rehearsal. "Let's reh—you know," said Migwan to Gladys, when the last touches had been put on the tepee, suddenly cutting her words short and making a hand sign to finish her sentence.

"Do you mind if I don't just now," answered Gladys, "I have such a bad headache I think I will lie down for a while. It must have been the sun glaring on the white canvas."

"I have one too," said Hinpoha, "it must have been the sun. I'll come later when Gladys does," she said to Migwan, with an aggravatingly mysterious hand sign.

At supper time Ophelia refused to eat and moped in a manner quite foreign to her. Her eyes were red and it looked as though she had been crying. After supper she still sat by herself in a corner of the porch and made no effort to trap the girls into telling their plans for the Fourth as she had been doing all day. "Come and play Blind-Man's-Buff on the lawn," called Migwan. Ophelia raised her head and looked at her listlessly, but made no effort to join in the merry game.

"Don't you feel well?" asked Nyoda, noting her languid manner. "Child, what makes your eyes so red?" she said, turning Ophelia's face toward the light.

"I don't know," said Ophelia, wriggling out of her grasp, and putting her head down on her knee.

"Come, let me put you to bed," said Nyoda. "I'm afraid you're going to be sick." In the morning Ophelia's face was all broken out and Nyoda groaned when she realized the truth. Ophelia had the measles. All preparations for the Fourth of July Ceremonial had to be called off, and the three girls in town telephoned not to come out. The sight of the tepee and all the plans it suggested called out a wail of despair every time the girls went out in the yard. On the morning of the Glorious Fourth Gladys woke to find herself spotted like a leopard.

"That must be the reason why I had such a fearful headache the other day," she said, as she took her place with the other sick one, half amused and wholly disgusted at herself for having fallen a victim.

"I had a headache too," said Hinpoha, in alarm, "I hope I'm not coming down with them. I've had them once."

"That doesn't help much," said Nyoda, "for I had them three times." Hinpoha's fears were realized, and by night there was a third case developed. And so, instead of a grand council on the Fourth of July there was real medicine making at Onoway House. None of the sufferers were very ill, although they must remain prisoners, and they had such a jolly time in the "contagious disease ward" that Migwan and Sahwah, who were finding things rather dull on the outside,

wished fervently that they had taken the measles too.

As soon as the three invalids were pronounced entirely well there was a celebration held in honor of the occasion in the tepee. At sundown Nyoda went around beating on a tin pan covered with a cloth in lieu of a tom-tom, which was always the signal for the tribe to come together. Tom, as runner, was dispatched to fetch the Landsdownes and Calvin Smalley. When the tribe came trooping in answer to the call, followed by the guests, they were marched in solemn file around the lawn and into the tepee. Inside there was a fire kindled in the center, with a circle of ponchos and blankets spread around it on the ground. "Bless my soul, but this is cozy," said Farmer Landsdowne, dropping down on a poncho and stretching himself comfortably.

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"Now, what shall we do?" asked Nyoda, who was mistress of ceremonies, "play games or tell stories?"

"Tell stories," begged Migwan, "we haven't 'wound the yarn' for an age."

"All right," agreed Nyoda, "shall we do it the way several of the Indian tribes do?"

"How do they do it?" asked Migwan.

"Well," said Nyoda, "there is a tradition among certain tribes that if anyone refuses to tell a story when he is asked he will grow a tail like a donkey. Sometimes, however, they do not wait for Nature to perform this miracle, but fasten a tail themselves onto the one who will not entertain the crowd when he is bidden, and he must wear it until he tells a story. Their way of asking one of their number to tell one is to remark 'There is a tail to you,' as a delicate way of expressing the fate that will be his if he refuses."

"Oh, what fun!" cried Sahwah.

"And now Gladys," said Nyoda, "'there is a tail to you.'"

Gladys placed more wood on the fire, which was burning low, and returned to her seat on the blanket. "Did I ever tell you," she began, "about my Aunt Beatrice? She and my Uncle Lynn were visiting here from the West with my little cousin Beatrice, who was only six months old. They were staying in a big hotel downtown. One night they went to a party, leaving Beatrice in their room at the hotel in the care of her nurse. At the party there was a fortune teller who amused the guests by reading their palms. When it came my aunt's turn the woman said to her, 'You have had one child, who is dead.' Everybody laughed because they knew Aunt Beatrice had never lost a baby, and little Beatrice was safe and sound in the hotel that very minute. But it worried my aunt almost to death, and she couldn't enjoy herself the rest of the evening.

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"Finally she said to my uncle, 'I can't stand it any longer, I must go home,' so they left the party just as the guests were sitting down to a midnight supper, and everybody made fun of her for being such a fussy young mother. When they got downtown they found the hotel in flames and the streets blocked for a long distance around. Aunt Beatrice finally broke through the fire lines and ran right past the firemen who tried to keep her out, into the burning building, and fought her way up-stairs through the smoke to her room, where she could hear a baby crying. She was blind from the smoke and could hardly see where she was going, but she picked up a rug from the floor, wrapped it around the baby and carried her out in safety. When she got outside they found it was not little Beatrice at all that she had saved, it was a strange baby. She had mistaken the room up-stairs in the smoke and carried out someone else's child. The building collapsed right after she came out and no one could go in any more. Beatrice and her nurse were lost in the fire." A murmur of horrified sympathy went around the circle in the tepee. "And," continued Gladys, "my Aunt Beatrice has never been herself since. She can't bear even to see a baby."

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"Is that the reason you wouldn't let me bring Marian Simpson's baby over the day she left it with me to take care of?" asked Hinpoha. "I remember you said your aunt was visiting you."

"Yes, that was why," said Gladys. "And now, Mr. Landsdowne," she added, "'there is a tail to you!'"

Farmer Landsdowne stared thoughtfully into the fire for a moment, and then a reminiscent smile began to wrinkle the corners of his eyes. "Would you like to hear a story about the old house?" he asked.

"You mean Onoway House?" asked Migwan.

Mr. Landsdowne nodded. "Only it seems strange to be calling it 'Onoway House.' It has always been known as 'Waterhouse's Place,' because old Deacon Waterhouse built it. Well, like most old houses, there are different stories told about it, but whether they are true or not, no one knows. People are so apt to believe anything they want to believe. Well, I started out to tell you the story about the gas well. But before I tell you about the gas well I suppose I ought to tell you about the Deacon's son. Mind you, the things I am telling you are only what I have heard from the folks around here; I never knew Deacon Waterhouse. He was dead and the house empty before the farm was split up, and it wasn't until the part that I now own was offered for sale that I ever came into this neighborhood. Well, to return to the Deacon's son. They say that there never was a finer looking young fellow than Charley Waterhouse. He was a regular prince among the country boys. But he didn't care a rap about farming. All he wanted to do was read; that and take the horse and buggy and drive to town. The old Deacon was terribly disappointed, of course, for Charley was his only son, and he couldn't see that the boy wasn't cut out to be a farmer. He railed about his love of books and wouldn't give him money for schooling. Charley stood it until he was eighteen and then he ran away, after forging the Deacon's name to a check. The folks

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around here never saw him again. Mrs. Waterhouse died of a broken heart, they say. They also say," he added with a twinkle in his eye, "that she died before she had her attic cleaned, and that her ghost comes back at night and sets the old furniture straight up there." Migwan and Hinpoah exchanged glances.

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"Now about the gas well," resumed Mr. Landsdowne. "The Deacon was digging for water on the farm. The old well had dried up during a long, hot spell and he was bound to go deep enough this time. Down they went—two, three hundred feet, and still no good water. The ground had turned into slate and shale. The well digger lit a match down in the hole when suddenly there was a terrific explosion which caved in the sides of the well and all the dirt which was piled around the outside slid in again, completely filling it up. A vein of gas had been struck. That very day the Deacon received word that his son was in San Francisco, dying, and wanted to see him. He forgot his anger over Charley's disgrace and started west that very night. He never came back. He stayed in San Francisco a whole year and then died out there. While he was there he mentioned the gas well to several people, or they say he did, and that's how the story got round. But if such a thing did happen, there was never any trace of it afterward. Personally I do not believe it ever happened. But superstitious folks around here say they can still hear the buried well digger striking with his pick against the earth that covers him."

"Two ghosts at Onoway House!" said Nyoda, "we are uncommonly well supplied," and the girls shivered and drew near together in mock fear. Thus, with various stories the evening wore away, until Farmer Landsdowne, looking at his big, old-fashioned silver watch with a start, remarked that he should have been in bed an hour ago, whereupon the company broke up. Calvin Smalley went home reluctantly. That evening spent by the fire in the tepee had been a sort of wonderland to him, unused as he was to family festivities of any kind.

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Nyoda lingered after the rest had gone to see that the fire in the tepee was properly extinguished. As she watched the glowing embers turn black one by one she became aware of a figure standing in the doorway. The moonlight fell directly on it and she could see that it was robed in flowing white, and instead of a face there was a hideous death's head. Horribly startled at first she recovered her composure when she remembered that she was living in a household which were given to playing jokes on each other. Flinging up her hands in mock terror, she recited dramatically,

"Art thou some angel, some devil, or some ghost?" The figure in the doorway never moved. Nyoda picked up the thick stick with which she had stirred the fire and rushed upon the ghost as if she intended to beat it to a pulp. It flung out its arm, covered with the flowing drapery, and Nyoda dropped her weapon and staggered back against the side of the tepee, sneezing with terrible violence, her eyes smarting and watering horribly. When the force of the paroxysm had spent itself and she could open her eyes again the ghost had vanished. Blind and choking, she made her way back to the house, intent on finding out who the ghost was, who had thrown red pepper into her eyes. That it was none of the dwellers at Onoway House was clear. The girls were already partly undressed, Ophelia was in bed, and Tom was taking a foot-bath in the kitchen under the watchful supervision of his mother to see that he got himself clean. A chorus of indignation rose on every side at the outrage, when Nyoda had told her tale.

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"Could it have been Calvin Smalley?" somebody asked. But this no one would believe. The boy was too gentle and manly, and too evidently delighted with his new neighbors to have done such a dastardly deed. Then who had dressed up as a ghost and thrown red pepper at Nyoda in the tepee?

CHAPTER V.—SAHWAH MAKES A DISCOVERY.

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As there was no one of their acquaintance whom they could suspect of being the ghost, the trick was laid at the door of some unknown dweller along the road with a fondness for horseplay. The girls spent the morning working quietly in the garden, and in the afternoon they went to the city in Gladys's automobile, all but Sahwah, who wanted to work on a waist she was making. Then, after the automobile was out of sight she discovered that she did not have the right kind of thread and could not work on it after all. With the prospect of a whole afternoon to herself, she decided to take a long walk. The Bartlett farm was not very large and she was soon at its boundary, and over on the Smalley property. In contrast to their little orchard and garden and meadow, the Smalley farm stretched out as far as she could see, with great corn and wheat fields, and acres of timber land. Somewhere on the place Calvin Smalley was working, and Sahwah made up her mind to find him and ask him over to Onoway House that night. But the extent of the Smalley farm was ninety-seven acres, and it was not so easy to find a person on it when one had no definite knowledge of that person's whereabouts. Sahwah walked and walked and walked, up one field and down another, shading her eyes with her hand to catch sight of the figure she was looking for. But Calvin was somewhere near the center of the cornfield, stooping near the ground, and the high stalks waved over his head and concealed him completely. Sahwah passed by without discovering him and crossed an open field that was lying fallow. Beyond this was a strip of marsh land which was practically impassable. Under ordinary circumstances Sahwah would have turned back, but being badly in want of something better to do she tried to cross it. She had seen two boards lying in the field, and securing these she laid them down on the

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treacherous mud, and by standing on one and laying the other down in front of her and then advancing to that one she actually got across in safety.

On the other side of the bog she spied a little clump of trees and headed toward them, for the sun was very hot in the open and the thought of a rest in the shade was attractive. When she came nearer she saw that this little copse sheltered a cottage, old and weatherbeaten and evidently deserted. Weeds grew around it, higher than the steps and the floor of the porch, and the crumbling chimney, which ran up on the outside of the house, was covered with a thick growth of Japanese ivy. "It's a regular House in the Woods," said Sahwah to herself, "only there are no dwarfs. I wonder what it's like inside," she went on in her thoughts. "Maybe we could come here sometime and build a fire—there must be a fireplace somewhere because there's a chimney—and have a Ceremonial Meeting or a picnic. How delightfully private it is!" The trees hid the house from view until one almost stumbled upon it, and then the marsh and the broad vacant field stretched between it and the farm, and behind it was the river, its banks hidden by a thick growth of willows and alders, so that the cottage was not visible to a person coming along the river in a boat. There was not a sound to be heard anywhere except the zig-a-zig of the grasshoppers in the field and the swish of the hidden water as it flowed over the stones. "A grand place to have a secret meeting of the Winnebagos," said Sahwah to herself, "where we wouldn't always be interrupted by Ophelia pounding on the door and wanting to come in. I wonder if it's open?"

She stepped up on the porch and tried the door. It was locked. She peered into the window. The room she saw was absolutely empty. She could not see whether there was a fireplace or not. She was seized with a desire to enter that cottage. It was deserted and tumble down and fascinating. Whoever owned it—if anyone did, for she was not sure whether it stood on the Smalley property or not—had evidently abandoned it to the elements. There was no harm at all in trying to get in. She pushed on the window. It apparently was also locked. But she pushed again and this time she heard a crack. The rotten wood was splitting away from the rusty catch. She pushed again and the window slid up. She stepped over the sill into the room.

The window was so thick with dirt that the light seemed dim inside. At one end of the room there was an open fireplace, long unused, with the mortar falling out between the bricks. There was another door in the wall opposite the front door, so evidently there was another room beyond. This door was also locked, but the key was in the lock and it turned readily under her hand and the door swung open. Sahwah stood still in surprise. This room was as full of furniture as the other had been empty. Around all four walls stood cabinets and bookcases, and besides these there was a couch, a desk, a table and several chairs. The table was covered with screws, little wheels and the works of clocks, and before it sat an old man, busily working with them. He had on a long, shabby grey dressing-gown and a high silk hat on his head. He did not look up as she opened the door, but went right on working, apparently oblivious to her presence. She stared at him in amazement for a moment, and then, remembering her manners, realized that she had deliberately walked into a gentleman's room without knocking.

"I beg your pardon," she said, in embarrassment, "I didn't know there was anyone here."

The old man looked up and saw her standing in the doorway. "Come in, come in," he said, affably, in a deep voice. Sahwah took a step into the room. The old man went back to his wheels and rods and took no more notice of her.

"What is that you're making?" asked Sahwah, curiously.

"It's a long story," said the man, taking off his hat, pulling a handkerchief out of it and putting it back on his head, and then falling to work again.

"Must be a genius," thought Sahwah, "that's what makes him act so queerly." She waited a few minutes in silence and then curiosity got the better of her. "Is it too long to tell?" she asked.

"Eh? What's that?" asked the man, turning toward her. He took off his hat, put his handkerchief back in again and then put the hat back on his head.

"I asked you," said Sahwah, politely, "if the story of what you are making is too long to tell."

"Not at all, not at all," said the man, and resumed his work without another word.

"How impolite!" thought Sahwah. "To urge me to stay and then refuse to answer my questions." Her eyes strayed around the room at the bookcases and cabinets. Every cabinet was filled with clocks or parts of clocks. The books as far as she could see were all about machinery. One was a book of such astounding width of binding that she leaned over to read the title. The letters were so faded that they were hardly visible. "L," she read, "E, F, E—"

"It's a machine for saving time," said the man at the table, so suddenly that Sahwah jumped.

"How interesting!" she said. "How does it work?"

The man fitted a rod into a wheel and apparently forgot her existence. She sat silent a few minutes more and then decided she had better go home. She rose softly to her feet. "It's something like a clock," said the man, without looking up from his work.

"It's coming after all," she thought, and sat down again.

After a silence of about five minutes the man spoke again. "It measures the time just like any clock," he explained, "only, as the minutes are ticked off, they are thrown into a little compartment at the side,—this thing," he said, holding up a little metal box. He lapsed into silence again and after an interval resumed where he had left off. "This compartment," he said,

“holds just an hour, and when it is full a bell rings and the compartment opens automatically, throwing the block of time, carefully wrapped to prevent leakage of seconds, out into this basket.” He took off his hat, brought out his handkerchief, polished a bit of glass with it, put it carefully back into the crown and replaced the hat on his head.

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It suddenly came over Sahwah that her ingenious host was not quite right in his mind, so rising abruptly she hastened out of the room. The man took no notice of her departure. She locked the door carefully after her, and went out by the window whence she had entered the house, pulling it shut from the outside. She did not undertake to cross the marsh again, but made a wide detour around it. When she was once more in the fallow field she looked back, but the house was invisible among the trees and bushes which surrounded it. As she sped past the rows of standing corn on her way home, Abner Smalley, bending low among them, saw her and straightened up with a suspicious look in his eyes. He glanced in the direction from which she had come. On one side was the empty field bordered by the marsh and the woody copse, and on the other was the path from the river which went in the direction of Onoway House. He breathed a sigh of relief. The girl had come from the direction of Onoway House, of course. The next day he put his bull to graze in the empty field before the copse. Then, in different places along the rail fence which enclosed this field he put signs reading: BEWARE THE BULL. HE IS UGLY.

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When the girls came back from town Sahwah told her discovery. “Nyoda,” said Gladys, suddenly, “do you suppose it could have been this man who threw the pepper at you?”

“Perhaps,” said Nyoda, and all the girls shuddered at the thought. Before Sahwah’s discovery they had agreed among themselves to say nothing about the ghost episode to anyone outside the family, so that the perpetrator of the joke, if he were one of the farmer boys living near, would not have the satisfaction of knowing that they were wrought up about it. In the meantime they would send Tom to get acquainted with all the boys on the road and try to find out something about it from them.

Calvin Smalley was over that evening and something was said about Sahwah’s adventure of the afternoon. “Calvin,” said Nyoda, directly, “who is the old man who lives in that house?”

Calvin looked very much distressed, and frightened too, it must be admitted. Then he laughed, although to Nyoda his laugh seemed a trifle forced, and said in his usual straightforward manner, “The man in the old house among the trees? That is my great uncle Peter, grandfather’s brother. He was something of an inventor and invented a time clock, but the patent was stolen by another and he never got the credit for inventing it. He worried about it until his mind became unbalanced. For years he has worked around with wheels and things, making strange contrivances for clocks. He is perfectly harmless and wouldn’t hurt a fly. He will not live in a house with people and he will not leave the cottage he lives in even for an hour, he is so afraid something will happen to his machine while he is away. We don’t like to have people know that he is there because they would say we ought to send him away, but Uncle Abner won’t do that because Uncle Peter hates to be with folks and he might not be allowed to play with his machine in an institution the way he can here. So as long as he is happy what is the difference? But you know how country people talk. So would it be asking a great deal to request you not to say anything about this to anyone, not even the Landsdownes? If Uncle Abner ever found out you knew he would be very angry, and would sure think I told you. I don’t see how you ever got in, anyway; the door is usually kept locked, and to all appearances the house is empty.” Sahwah looked decidedly uncomfortable as she met the eyes of several of the girls, but no one mentioned the manner in which she had gained entrance. Inasmuch as she had pried into this secret she felt it was no more than right to promise to keep it.

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“All right, we won’t say anything,” she said, reassuringly. All the others gave an equally solemn promise, and were glad that Ophelia had heard none of the talk about the matter, for she had been over at the Landsdowne’s since before Sahwah told her adventure. Little pitchers have wide mouths as well as big ears.

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The girls all looked at each other when Calvin asserted that his Uncle Peter never left the house even for an hour. Clearly then, he had not been the ghost.

Migwan had bad dreams that night. Just before going to bed she had been reading a volume of Poe, which is not the most sleep producing literature known. She dreamed that she was lying awake in her bed, looking at a big square of moonlight on the floor, when suddenly a black shadow fell across it, and the figure of a monkey appeared on the windowsill, stood there a moment and then jumped into the room. Shuddering with fright she woke up, and could hardly rid herself of the impression of the dream, it had seemed so real. There was a big square of moonlight on the floor. “I must have seen it in my sleep,” she thought, “it’s exactly like the one in my dream.” She lay wondering if it were possible to see things with your eyes closed, when all of a sudden her heart began to thump madly. Into the moonlight there was creeping a black shadow. It remained still for a few seconds, a grotesque-shaped thing with a long tail, and then something came hurtling through the window and landed on the floor beside the bed. Migwan gave a scream that roused the house. Hinpoha, starting up wildly, jumped from bed and landed squarely on the black specter on the floor. The form struggled and squirmed and sent forth a long wailing ME-OW-W-W.

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“What is the matter?” cried Nyoda and Gladys and Betty and Sahwah, running to the rescue.

“It’s a cat!” said Migwan, faintly. “I thought it was a monkey!”

“Moral: Don’t read Poe before going to bed,” said Nyoda, while the rest shouted with laughter at

the cause of Migwan's fright.

"It must have jumped in from the tree," said Hinpoha. "I see our screen has fallen out."

There was little sleep in the house the rest of the night. During the time when the screen was out of the window the room had filled with mosquitoes, which soon found their way to the rest of the rooms. "If you offered me the choice of sleeping in a room with a monkey or a swarm of mosquitoes, I believe I'd take the monkey," said Nyoda, slapping viciously. Altogether it was a heavy-eyed group that came down to breakfast the next morning.

"What are we going to do to-day?" asked Gladys.

"The usual thing," said Migwan, "pull weeds. That is, I am. You girls don't need to help all the time. I don't want you to think of my garden as merely a lot of weeds to be forever pulled. I want you to remember only the beautiful part of it."

"We don't mind pulling weeds," cried the girls, stoutly, "it's fun when we all do it together," and they fell to work with a will. 67

"I declare," said Migwan, "I have become so zealous in the pursuit of weeds that I mechanically start to pull them along the roadside. I actually believe that if a weed grew on my grave I'd rise up and eradicate it. I little thought when I proudly won an honor last summer for identifying ten different weeds that they'd get to haunting my dreams the way they do now. Now I know what people mean when they say 'meaner than pusley.' It's the meanest thing I've ever dealt with. I cut off and pull up every trace of it one day and the next day there it is again, just as flourishing as ever."

"I don't call that meanness," said Nyoda, "that's just cheerful persistence. Think what a success we'd all be in life if we got ahead in the face of obstacles in that way. If I didn't already have a perfectly good symbol I'd take pusley for mine. If it were edible I think I'd use it as an exclusive article of diet for a time and see if I couldn't absorb some of its characteristics."

While she was talking Ophelia came along with a frog on a shovel, which she proceeded to throw over the fence. "Come back with that frog," said Migwan, "I need him in my business. Don't you know that frogs eat the insects off the plants and we have that many less to kill?" Ophelia was standing in the strong sunlight, and Nyoda noticed that the circle of light hair on her head was still golden clear to the roots, although the ringlets were visibly growing. 68

"It must be a freak of Nature," she concluded, "for it certainly isn't bleached."

Rest at Onoway House was again doomed to be broken that night. Nyoda had been peacefully sleeping for some time when she woke up at the touch of something cold upon her face. She started up and the feeling disappeared. She went to sleep again, thinking she had been dreaming. Soon the feeling came again, as of something cold lying on her forehead. She put up her hand and encountered a cold and knobby object. At her touch the thing—whatever it was—jumped away. She sprang out of bed and lit the lamp. The sight that met her eyes as she looked around the room made her pinch herself to see if she were really awake and not in the midst of some nightmare. All over the floor, chairs, table, beds, bureau and wash-stand sat frogs; big frogs, little frogs, medium-sized frogs; all goggling solemnly at her in the lamplight. She stared open mouthed at the apparition. Could this be another Plague of Frogs, she asked herself, such as was visited upon Pharaoh? At her horrified exclamation Gladys woke up, gave one look around the room and dove under the bedclothes with a wild yell. To her excited eyes it looked as if there were a million frogs in the room. 69

"What's the matter?" asked Ophelia, sitting up in bed and staring around her sleepily.

"Don't you see the frogs?" cried Nyoda.

"Sure I see them," said Ophelia. "Aren't you glad I got so many?"

"Ophelia!" gasped Nyoda, "did you bring those frogs in here?"

"Betcher I did," said Ophelia, with pride, "and it took me most all afternoon to catch the whole sackful, too. What's wrong?" she asked, as she saw the expression on Nyoda's face. "Yer said they'd eat the bugs and yer made such a fuss about the mosquitoes last night that I brought the toads to eat them while we slept." Nyoda dropped limply into a chair. The inspirations of Ophelia surpassed anything she had ever read in fiction.

If anybody has ever tried to catch a roomful of frogs that were not anxious to be caught they can appreciate the chase that went on at Onoway House that night. The first faint streaks of dawn were appearing in the sky before the family finally retired once more. Sufficient to say that Ophelia never set up another mosquito trap made of frogs.

CHAPTER VI.—THE WINNEBAGOS SCENT A PLOT. 70

"Where are you going, my pretty maid, and why the step ladder?" said Nyoda to Migwan one morning. "Have your beans grown up so high over night that you have to climb a ladder to pick them?"

"Come and see!" said Migwan, mysteriously. Nyoda followed her to the front lawn. Migwan set the ladder up beside a dead tree, from which the branches had been sawn, leaving a slender trunk about seven feet high. On top of this Migwan proceeded to nail a flat board.

"Are you going to live on a pillar, like St. Simeon Stylites?" asked Nyoda, curiously, as Migwan mounted the ladder with a basin of water in her hand.

"O come, Nyoda," said Migwan, "don't you know a bird bathtub when you see one?"

"A bathtub, is it?" said Nyoda. "Now I breathe easily again. But why so extremely near the earth?"

Migwan laughed at her chaffing. "You have to put them high up," she explained, "or else the cats get the birds when they are bathing. Mr. Landsdowne told me how to make it." The other girls wandered out and inspected the drinking fountain-bathtub. Hinpoha closed one eye and looked critically at the outfit.

"Doesn't it strike you as being a little inharmonious?" she asked. "Black stump, unfinished wood platform, and blue enamel basin."

"Paint the platform and basin dark green," said Sahwah, the practical. "There is some green paint down cellar, I saw it. Let me paint it. I can do that much for the birds, even if I didn't think of building them a drinking fountain." She sped after the paint and soon transformed the offending articles so that they blended harmoniously with the surroundings.

"It's better now," said Nyoda, thoughtfully, "but it's still crude and unbeautiful. What is wrong?"

"I know," said Hinpoha, the artistic one. "It's too bare. It looks like a hat without any trimming. What it needs is vines around it."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Migwan. "I'll plant climbing nasturtiums and train them to go up the pole and wind around the basin, so it will look like a fountain."

"Four heads are better than one," observed Nyoda, as the seeds were planted, "when they are all looking in the same direction."

Just then a young man came up the path from the road. "May I use your telephone?" he asked, courteously raising his hat. He spoke with a slight foreign accent.

"Certainly you may," said Migwan, going with him into the house. She could not help hearing what he said. He called up a number in town and when he had his connection, said, "This is Larue talking. We are going to do it on the Centerville Road. There is a river near." That was all. He rang off, thanked Migwan politely and walked off down the road. The incident was forgotten for a time.

That afternoon Gladys was coming home in the automobile. At the turn in the road just before you came to Onoway House there was a car stalled. The driver, a young and pretty woman, was apparently in great perplexity what to do. "Can I help you?" asked Gladys, stopping her machine.

"I don't know what's the matter," said the young woman, "but I can't get the car started. I'm afraid I'll have to be towed to a garage. Do you know of anyone around here who has a team of horses?"

Gladys looked at the starting apparatus of the other car, but it was a different make from hers and she knew nothing about it. "Would you like to have me tow you to our barn?" she asked. "There is a man up the road who fixes automobiles for a great many people who drive through here and I could get him to come over."

The young woman appeared much relieved. "If you would be so kind it would be a great favor," she said, "for I am in haste to-day."

Gladys towed the car to the barn at Onoway House and phoned for the car tinker. The young woman, who introduced herself as Miss Mortimer, was a very pleasant person indeed, and quite won the hearts of the girls. She was delighted with Onoway House, both with the name and the house itself, and asked to be shown all over it, from garret to cellar. "How near that tree is to the window!" she said, as she looked out of the attic window into the branches of the big Balm of Gilead tree that grew beside the house, close to Migwan and Hinpoha's bedroom. It was much higher than the house and its branches drooped down on the roof. "How do you ever move about up here with all this furniture?" asked Miss Mortimer.

"Oh," answered Migwan, "we never come up here."

The barn likewise struck the visitor's fancy, with its big empty lofts, and she fell absolutely in love with the river. The girls took her for a ride on the raft, and she amused herself by sounding the depth of the water with the pole. They could see that she was experienced in handling boats from the way she steered the raft. The girls were so charmed with her that they felt a keen regret when the neighborhood tinker announced that the car was in running shape again.

"I've had a lovely time, girls," said Miss Mortimer, shaking the hand of each in farewell. "I can't thank you enough."

"Come and see us again, if you are ever passing this way," said Migwan, cordially.

"You may possibly see me again," said Miss Mortimer, half to herself, as she got into her machine and drove away.

There was no moon that night and the cloud-covered sky hinted at approaching rain, but Sahwah

wanted to go out on the river on the raft, so Nyoda and Migwan and Hinpoha and Gladys went with her. It was too dark to play any kind of games and the girls were too tired and breathless from the hot day to sing, so they floated down-stream in lazy silence, watching the shapeless outlines made against the dull sky by the trees and bushes along the banks. On the other side of Farmer Landsdowne's place there was an abandoned farm. The house had stood empty for many years, its cheerless windows brooding in the sunlight and glaring in the moonlight. Just as they did with every other vacant house, the Winnebagos nicknamed this one the Haunted House, and vied with each other in describing the queer noises they had heard issuing from it and the ghosts they had seen walking up and down the porch. As they passed this place, gliding silently along the river, they were surprised to see an automobile standing beside the house, at the little side porch, in the shadow of a row of tall trees.

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"The ghosts are getting prosperous," whispered Migwan, "they have bought an automobile to do their nightly wandering in. Pretty soon we can't say that ghosts 'walk' any more. Ah, here come the ghosts."

From the side door of the house came two men, who proceeded to lift various boxes from under the seats of the car and carry them into the house. Then they lifted out a small keg, which the girls could not help noticing they handled with greater care than they had the boxes. The wind was blowing toward the river, and the girls distinctly heard one man say to the other, "Be careful now, you know what will happen if we drop this."

"I'm being as careful as I can," answered the second man.

After a few seconds the first one spoke again. "When's Belle coming?"

"She arrived in town to-day," said his partner.

When they had gone into the house this time the machine suddenly drove away, revealing the presence of a third man at the wheel, whom the girls had not noticed before this. The two men stayed in the house.

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"What on earth can be happening there?" said Sahwah.

"It certainly does look suspicious," said Nyoda.

They waited there in the shadow of the willows for a long time to see what would happen next, but nothing did. The house stood blank and silent and apparently as empty as ever. Not a glimmer of light was visible anywhere. Sahwah and Nyoda were just on the point of getting into the rowboat, which had been tied on behind the raft, and towing the other girls back home, when their ears caught the sound of a faint splashing, like the sound made by the dipping of an oar. They were completely hidden from sight either up or down the river, for just at this point a portion of the bank had caved in, and the water filling up the hole had made a deep indentation in the shore line, and into this miniature bay the Tortoise-Crab had been steered. The thick willows along the bank formed a screen between them and the stream above and below. But they could look between the branches and see what was coming up stream, from the direction of the lake. It was a rowboat, containing two persons. The scudding clouds parted at intervals and the moon shone through, and by its fitful light they could see that one of these persons was a woman. When the rowboat was almost directly behind the house it came to a halt, only a few yards from the place where the Winnebagos lay concealed.

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"This is the house," said the man.

"I told you the water was deep enough up this far," said the woman, in a tone of satisfaction. Just then the moon shone out for a brief instant, and the Winnebagos looked at each other in surprise. The woman, or rather the girl, in the rowboat was Miss Mortimer, who had been their guest only that day. The next moment she spoke. "We might as well go back now. There isn't anything more we can do. I just wanted to prove to you that it could be towed up the river this far without danger."

"All right, Belle," replied the man, and at the sound of his voice Migwan pricked up her ears. There was something vaguely familiar about it; something which eluded her at the moment. The rowboat turned in the river and proceeded rapidly down-stream. The Winnebagos returned home, full of excitement and wonder.

The barn at Onoway House stood halfway between the house and the river. As they landed from the raft and were tying it to the post they saw a man come out of the barn and disappear among the bushes that grew nearby. It was too dark to see him with any degree of distinctness. Gladys's thought leaped immediately to her car, which was left in the barn. "Somebody's trying to steal the car!" she cried, and they all hastened to the barn. The automobile stood undisturbed in its place. They made a hasty search with lanterns, but as far as they could see, none of the gardening tools were missing. Satisfied that no damage had been done, they went into the house.

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"Probably a tramp," said Mrs. Gardiner, when the facts were told her. "He evidently thought he would sleep in the barn, and then changed his mind for some reason or other."

Migwan lay awake a long time trying to place the voice of the man in the rowboat. Just as she was sinking off to sleep it came to her. The voice she had heard in the darkness had a slightly foreign accent, and was the voice of the man who had used the telephone that morning.

Sometime during the night Onoway House was awakened by the sounds of a terrific thunder storm. The girls flew around shutting windows. After a few minutes of driving rain against the window panes the sound changed. It became a sharp clattering. "Hail!" said Sahwah.

"Oh, my young plants!" cried Migwan. "They will be pounded to pieces."

"Cover them with sheets and blankets!" suggested Nyoda. With their accustomed swiftness of action the Winnebagos snatched up everything in the house that was available for the purpose and ran out into the garden, and spread the covers over the beds in a manner which would keep the tender young plants from being pounded to pieces by the hailstones. Migwan herself ran down to the farthest bed, which was somewhat separated from the others. As she raced to save it from destruction she suddenly ran squarely into someone who was standing in the garden. She had only time to see that it was a man, when, with a muffled exclamation of alarm he disappeared into space. Disappeared is the only word for it. He did not run, he never reached the cover of the bushes; he simply vanished off the face of the earth. One moment he was and the next moment he was not. Much excited, Migwan ran back to the others and told her story, only to be laughed at and told she was seeing things and had lurking men on the brain. The thing was so queer and uncanny that she began to wonder herself if she had been fully awake at the time, and if she might not possibly have dreamed the whole thing.

The morning dawned fresh and fair after the shower, green and gold with the sun on the garden, and Migwan's delight at finding the tender little plants unharmed, thanks to their timely covering, was inclined to thrust the mysterious goings-on at the empty house the night before into secondary place in her mind. But she was not allowed to forget it, for it was the sole topic of conversation at the breakfast table. Gladys, with her nose buried in the morning paper, suddenly looked up. "Listen to this," she said, and then began to read: "Another dynamite plot unearthed. Society for the purpose of assassinating men prominent in affairs and dynamiting large buildings discovered in attempt to blow up the Court House. An attempt to blow up the new Court House was frustrated yesterday when George Brown, one of the custodians, saw a man crouching in the engine room and ordered him out. A search revealed the fact that dynamite had been placed on the floor and attached to a fuse. On being arrested the man confessed that he was a member of the famous Venoti gang, operating in the various large cities. The man is being held without bail, but the head of the gang, Dante Venoti, is still at large, and so is his wife, Bella, who aids him in all his activities. No clue to their whereabouts can be found."

"Do you suppose," said Gladys, laying the paper down, "that those men we saw last night could belong to that gang? You remember how carefully they carried the keg into the house, as if it contained some explosive. They couldn't have any business there or they wouldn't have come at night. And they called the woman in the boat 'Belle,' or it might have been 'Bella.'"

"And that man in the boat was the same one who came here and used the telephone yesterday morning," said Migwan. "I couldn't help noticing his foreign accent. He said, 'We are going to do it on the Centerville Road. There is a river near.' What are they going to do on the Centerville Road?"

The garden work was neglected while the girls discussed the matter. "And the man we saw coming out of the barn when we came home," said Sahwah, "he probably had something to do with it, too."

"And the man I saw in the garden in the middle of the night," said Migwan.

"If you *did* see a man," said Nyoda, somewhat doubtfully. Migwan did not insist upon her story. What was the use, when she had no proof, and the thing had been so uncanny?

They were all moved to real grief over the fact that the delightful Miss Mortimer should have a hand in such a dark business—in fact, was undoubtedly the famous Bella Venoti herself. "I can't believe it," said Migwan, "she was so jolly and friendly, and was so charmed with Onoway House."

"I wonder why she wanted to go through it from attic to cellar," said Sahwah, shrewdly. "Could she have had some purpose? *Migwan!*" she cried, jumping up suddenly, "don't you remember that she said, 'How near that tree is to the window'? Could she have been thinking that it would be easy to climb in there? And when she asked how we ever moved about with all that furniture up there, you said, 'We never come up here'! Don't you see what we've done? We've given her a chance to look the house over and find a place where people could hide if they wanted to, and as much as told her that they would be safe up here because we never came up."

Consternation reigned at this speech of Sahwah's. The girls remembered the incident only too well. "I'll never be able to trust anyone again," said Migwan, near to tears, for she had conceived a great liking for the young woman she had known as "Miss Mortimer."

"Do you remember," pursued Sahwah, "how she took the pole of the raft and found out how deep the water was all along, and then afterwards she said to the man in the boat, 'I told you it was deep enough.' Everything she did at our house was a sort of investigation."

"But it was only by accident that she got to Onoway House in the first place," said Gladys. "All she did was ask me to tell her where she could get a team of horses to tow her to a garage. She didn't know I belonged to Onoway House. It was I who brought her here, and she only stayed because we asked her to. It doesn't look as if she had any serious intentions of investigating the neighborhood. She said she was in a hurry to go on." Migwan brightened visibly at this. She clutched eagerly at any hope that Miss Mortimer might be innocent after all.

"How do you know that that breakdown in the road was accidental?" asked Nyoda. "And how can you be sure that she didn't know you came from Onoway House? She may have been looking for a pretense to come here and you played right into her hands by offering to tow her into the barn."

Migwan's hope flickered and went out.

"And the man in the barn," said Sahwah, knowingly, "he might have come to look the automobile over and become familiar with the way the barn door opened, so he could get into the car and drive away in a hurry if he wanted to get away." Taken all in all, there was only one conclusion the girls could come to, and that was that there was something suspicious going on in the neighborhood, and it looked very much as if the Venoti gang were hiding explosives in the empty house and were planning to bring something else; what it was they could not guess. At all events, something must be done about it. Nyoda called up the police in town and told briefly what they had seen and heard, and was told that plain clothes men would be sent out to watch the empty house. When she described the man who had called and used the telephone, the police officer gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

"That description fits Venoti closely," he said. "He used to have a mustache, but he could very easily have shaved it off. It's very possible that it was he. He's done that trick before; asked to use people's telephones as a means of getting into the house."

The girls thrilled at the thought of having seen the famous anarchist so close. "Hadn't we better tell the Landsdownes about it?" asked Migwan. "They are in a better position to watch that house from their windows than we are."

"You're right," said Nyoda. "And we ought to tell the Smalleys, too, so they will be on their guard and ready to help the police if it is necessary."

"I hate to go over there," said Migwan, "I don't like Mr. Smalley."

"That has nothing to do with it," said Nyoda, firmly. "The fact that he is fearfully stingy and grasping has no bearing on this case. He has a right to know it if his property is in danger." And she proceeded forthwith to the Red House.

Mr. Smalley was inclined to pooh-pooh the whole affair as the imagination of a houseful of women. "Saw a man running out of your barn, did you?" he asked, showing some interest in this part of the tale. "Well now, come to think of it," he said, "I saw someone sneaking around ours too, last night. But I didn't think much of it. That's happened before. It's usually chicken thieves. I keep a big dog in the barn and they think twice about breaking in after they hear him bark, and you haven't any chickens, that's why nothing was touched." It was a very simple explanation of the presence of the man in the barn, but still it did not satisfy Nyoda. She could not help connecting it in some way with the occurrences in the vacant house.

Mr. Landsdowne was very much interested and excited at the story when it was told to him. "There's probably a whole lot more to it than we know," he said, getting out his rifle and beginning to clean it. "There's more going on in this country in the present state of affairs than most people dream of. You have notified the police? That's good; I guess there won't be many more secret doings in the empty house."

As Nyoda and Migwan went home from the Landsdownes they passed a telegraph pole in the road on which a man was working. Silhouetted against the sky as he was they could see his actions clearly. He was holding something to his ear which looked like a receiver, and with the other hand he was writing something down in a little book. Migwan looked at him curiously; then she started. "Nyoda," she said, in a whisper, "that is the same man who used our telephone. That is Dante Venoti himself." As if conscious that they were looking at him, the man on the pole put down the pencil, and drawing his cap, which had a large visor, down over his face, he bent his head so they could not get another look at his features. "That's the man, all right," said Migwan. "What do you suppose he is doing?"

"It looks," said Nyoda, judicially, "as if he were tapping the wires for messages that are expected to pass at this time. Possibly you did not notice it, but I began to look at that man as soon as we stepped into the road from Landsdowne's, and I saw him look at his watch and then hastily put the receiver to his ear."

"Oh, I hope the police from town will come soon," said Migwan, hopping nervously up and down in the road.

"Until they do come we had better keep a close watch on what goes on around here," said Nyoda. Accordingly the Winnebagos formed themselves into a complete spy system. Migwan and Gladys and Betty and Tom took baskets and picked the raspberries that grew along the road as an excuse for watching the road and the front of the house, while Nyoda and Sahwah and Hinpoha took the raft and patrolled the river. As the girls in the road watched, the man climbed down from the pole, walked leisurely past them, went up the path to the empty house and seated himself calmly on the front steps, fanning himself with his hat, apparently an innocent line man taking a rest from the hot sun at the top of his pole.

"He's afraid to go in with us watching him," whispered Migwan. Just then a large automobile whirled by, stirring up clouds of dust, which temporarily blinded the girls. When they looked again toward the house the "line man" had vanished from the steps. "He's gone inside!" said Migwan, when they saw without a doubt that he was nowhere in sight outdoors.

Meanwhile the girls on the raft, who had been keeping a sharp lookout down-stream with a pair of opera glasses, saw something approaching in the distance which arrested their attention. For a long time they could not make out what it was—it looked like a shapeless black mass. Then as they drew nearer they saw what was coming, and an exclamation of surprise burst from each one. It was a structure like a portable garage on a raft, towed by a launch. As it drew nearer still

they could make out with the opera glasses that the person at the wheel was a woman, and that woman was Bella Venoti.

The hasty arrival of an automobile full of armed men who jumped out in front of the "vacant" house frightened the girls in the road nearly out of their wits, until they realized that these were the plain clothes men from town. After sizing up the house from the outside the men went up the path to the porch. The girls were watching them with a fascinated gaze, and no one saw the second automobile that was coming up the road far in the distance. One of the plain clothes men, who seemed to be the leader of the group, rapped sharply on the door of the house. There was no answer. He rapped again. This time the door was flung wide open from the inside. The girls could see that the man in the doorway was Dante Venoti. The officer of the law stepped forward. "Your little game is up, Dante Venoti," he said, quietly, "and you are under arrest."

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Dante Venoti looked at him in open-mouthed astonishment. "Vatevaire do you mean?" he gasped. "I am under arrest? Has ze law stop ze production? Chambers, Chambers," he called over his shoulder, "come here queek. Ze police has stop' ze production!"

A tall, lanky, decidedly American looking individual appeared in the doorway behind him. "What the deuce!" he exclaimed, at the sight of all the men on the porch. At this moment the second automobile drove up, followed by a third and a fourth. A large number of men and women dismounted and ran up the path to the house.

"Caruthers! Simpson! Jimmy!" shouted Venoti, excitedly to the latest arrivals, "ze police has stop ze production!"

"What do you know about it!" exclaimed someone in the crowd of newcomers, evidently one of those addressed. "Where's Belle?"

"She is bringing zeze caboose! Up ze rivaire!" cried the black haired man, wringing his hands in distress.

The plain clothes men looked over the band of people that stood around him. There was nothing about them to indicate their desperate character. Instead of being Italians as they had expected, they seemed to be mostly Americans. The leader of the policemen suddenly looked hard at Venoti. "Say," he said, "you look like a Dago, but you don't talk like one. Who are you, anyway?"

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"I am Felix Larue," said the black haired man, "I am ze director of ze Great Western Film Company, and zeze are all my actors. We have rent zis house and farm for ze production of ze war play 'Ze Honor of a Soldier.' Last night we bring some of ze properties to ze house; zey are very valuable, and Chambers and Bushbower here zey stay in ze house wiz zem."

The plain clothes men looked at each other and started to grin. Migwan and Gladys, who had joined the company on the porch, suddenly felt unutterably foolish. "But what were you doing on top of the pole?" faltered Migwan.

Mr. Larue turned his eyes toward her. He recognized her as the girl who had allowed him to use her telephone the day before, and favored her with a polite bow. "Me," he said, "I play ze part of ze spy in ze piece—ze villain. I tap ze wire and get ze message. I was practice for ze part zis morning." He turned beseechingly to the policeman who had questioned him. "Zen you will not stop ze production?" he asked.

"Heavens, no," answered the policeman. "We were going to arrest you for an anarchist, that's all."

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The company of actors were dissolving into hysterical laughter, in which the plain clothes men joined sheepishly. Just then a young woman came around the house from the back, followed at a short distance by Nyoda, Sahwah and Hinpoha. Seeing the crowd in front she stopped in surprise. Larue went to the edge of the porch and called to her reassuringly. "Come on, Belle," he called, gaily. When she was up on the porch he took her by the hand and led her forward. "Permit me to introduce my fellow conspirator," he said, in a theatrical manner and with a low bow. "Zis is Belle Mortimer, ze leading lady of ze Great Western Film Company!"

CHAPTER VII.—MOVING PICTURES.

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The Winnebagos looked at each other speechlessly. Belle Mortimer, the famous motion picture actress, whom they had seen on the screen dozens of times, and for whom Migwan had long entertained a secret and devouring adoration! Not Bella Venoti at all! "Did you ever?" gasped Sahwah.

"No, I never," answered the Winnebagos, in chorus.

Miss Mortimer recognized her hostesses of the day before and greeted them warmly. "My kind friends from Onoway House," she called them. The Winnebagos were embarrassed to death to have to explain how they had spied on the vacant house and thought the famous Venoti gang was at work, and were themselves responsible for the presence of the policemen.

"I never *heard* of anything so funny," she said, laughing until the tears came. "I *never* heard of anything so funny!" The plain clothes men departed in their automobile, disappointed at not

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having made the grand capture they had expected to. "Would you like to stay with us for the day and watch us work?" asked Miss Mortimer. 92

"Oh, could we?" breathed Migwan. She was in the seventh heaven at the thought of being with Belle Mortimer so long. Then followed a day of delirious delight. To begin with, the Winnebagos were introduced to the whole company, many of whose names were familiar to them. Felix Larue, having gotten over the fright he had received when he thought the piece was going to be suppressed by the police for some unaccountable reason, was all smiles and amiability, and explained anything the girls wanted to know about. The piece was a very exciting one, full of thrilling incidents and danger, and the girls were held spellbound at the physical feats which some of those actors performed. The house on the raft was explained as the play progressed. It was filled with soldiers and towed up the river, to all appearances merely a garage being moved by its owner. But when a dispatch bearer of the enemy, whose family lived in the house, stopped to see them while he was carrying an important message, the soldiers rushed out from the garage, sprang ashore, seized the man along with the message and carried him away in the launch, which had been cut away from the raft while the capture was being made. Migwan thought of the tame little plots she had written the winter before and was filled with envy at the creator of this stirring play. 93

It took a whole week to make the film of "The Honor of a Soldier" and in that time the girls saw a great deal of Miss Mortimer. And one blessed night she stayed at Onoway House with them, instead of motoring back to the city with the rest of the company. Just as Migwan was dying of admiration for her, so she was attracted by this dreamy-eyed girl with the lofty brow. In a confidential moment Migwan confessed that she had written several motion picture plays the winter before, all of which had been rejected. "Do you mind if I see them?" asked Miss Mortimer. Much embarrassed, Migwan produced the manuscripts, written in the form outlined in the book she had bought. Miss Mortimer read them over carefully, while Migwan awaited her verdict with a beating heart.

"Well?" she asked, when Miss Mortimer had finished reading them.

"Who told you to put them in this form?" asked Miss Mortimer.

"I learned it from a book," answered Migwan. "What do you think of them?" she asked, impatient for Miss Mortimer's opinion.

"The idea in one of them is good, very good," said Miss Mortimer. "This one called 'Jerry's Sister.' But you have really spoiled it in the development. It takes a person familiar with the production of a film to direct the movements of the actors intelligently. If Mr. Larue, for example, had developed that piece it would be a very good one. Would you be willing to sell just the idea, if Mr. Larue thinks he can use it?" 94

Migwan had never thought of this before. "Why, yes," she said, "I suppose I would. It's certainly no good to me as it is."

"Let me take it to Mr. Larue," said Miss Mortimer. "I'm sure he will see the possibilities in it just as I have." Migwan was in a transport of delight to think that her idea at least had found favor with Miss Mortimer. Miss Mortimer was as good as her word and showed the play to Mr. Larue and he agreed with her that it could be developed into a side-splitting farce comedy. Migwan was more intoxicated with that first sale of the labors of her pen than she was at any future successes, however great. Deeply inspired by this recognition of her talent, she evolved an exciting plot from the incidents which had just occurred, namely, the mistaking of the moving picture company for the Venoti gang. She kept it merely in plot form, not trying to develop it, and Mr. Larue accepted this one also. After this second success, even though the price she received for the two plots was not large, the future stretched out before Migwan like a brilliant rainbow, with a pot of gold under each end.

Miss Mortimer soon discovered that the Winnebagos were a group of Camp Fire Girls, and she immediately had an idea. When "The Honor of a Soldier" was finished Mr. Larue was going to produce a piece which called for a larger number of people than the company contained, among them a group of Camp Fire Girls. He intended hiring a number of "supers" for this play. "Why not hire the Winnebagos?" said Miss Mortimer. And so it was arranged. Medmangi and Nakwisi and Chapa, the other three Winnebagos, were notified to join the ranks, and excitement ran high. To be in a real moving picture! It is true that they had nothing special to do, just walk through the scene in one place and sit on the ground in a circle in another, but there was not a single girl who did not hope that her conduct on that occasion would lead Mr. Larue into hiring her as a permanent member of the company. 95

Especially Sahwah. The active, strenuous life of a motion picture actress attracted her more than anything just now. She longed to be in the public eye and achieve fame by performing thrilling feats. She saw herself in a thousand different positions of danger, always the heroine. Now she was diving for a ring dropped into the water from the hand of a princess; now she was trapped in a burning building; now she was riding a wild horse. But always she was the idol of the company, and the idol of the moving picture audiences, and the envy of all other actresses. She would receive letters from people all over the country and her picture would be in the papers and in the magazines, and her name would be featured on the colored posters in front of the theatres. Managers would quarrel over her and she would be offered a fabulous salary. All this Sahwah saw in her mind's eye as the future which was waiting for her, for since meeting Miss Mortimer she really meant to be a motion picture actress when she was through school. She felt in her heart that she could show people a few things when it came to feats of action. She simply could 96

not wait for the day when the Winnebagos were to be in the picture. When the play was produced in the city theatres her friends would recognize her, and Oh joy!—here her thoughts became too gay to think.

The play in question was staged, not on the Centerville road, but in one of the city parks, where there were hills and formal gardens and an artificial lake, which were necessary settings. The day arrived at last. News had gone abroad that a motion picture play was to be staged in that particular park and a curious crowd gathered to watch the proceedings. Sahwah felt very splendid and important as she stood in the company of the actors. She knew that the crowd did not know that she was just in that one play as a filler-in; to them she was really and truly a member of this wonderful company—a real moving picture actress. Gazing over the crowd with an air of indifference, she suddenly saw one face that sent the blood racing to her head. That was Marie Lanning, the girl whom Sahwah had defeated so utterly in the basketball game the winter before, and who had tried such underhand means to put her out of the game. Sahwah felt that her triumph was complete. Marie was just the kind of girl who would nearly die of envy to see her rival connected with anything so conspicuous.

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The picture began; progressed; the time came for the march of the Camp Fire Girls down the steep hill. Sahwah stood straight as a soldier; the supreme moment had come. Now Mr. Larue would see that she stood out from all the other girls in ability to act; that moment was to be the making of her fortune. She glanced covertly at Marie Lanning. Marie had recognized her and was staring at her with unbelieving, jealous eyes. The march began. Sahwah held herself straighter still, if that were possible, and began the descent. It was hard going because it was so steep, but she did not let that spoil her upright carriage. She was just in the middle of the line, which was being led by Nyoda, and could see that the girls in front of her were getting out of step and breaking the unity of the line in their efforts to preserve their balance. Not so Sahwah. She saw Mr. Larue watching her and she knew he was comparing her with the rest. Her fancy broke loose again and she had a premonition of her future triumphs. The sight of the camera turned full on her gave her a sense of elation beyond words. It almost intoxicated her. Halfway down the hill Sahwah, with her head full of day-dreams, stepped on a loose stone which turned under her foot, throwing her violently forward. She fell against Hinpoha, who was in front of her. Hinpoha, utterly unprepared for this impetus from the rear, lost her balance completely and crashed into Gladys. Gladys was thrown against Nyoda, and the whole four of them went down the hill head over heels for all the world like a row of dominoes.

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Down at the bottom of the hill stood the hero and heroine of the piece, namely, Miss Mortimer and Chambers, the leading man, and as the landslide descended it engulfed them and the next moment there was a heap of players on the ground in a tangled mass. It took some minutes to extricate them, so mixed up were they. Mr. Larue hastened to the spot with an exclamation of very excusable impatience. Several dozen feet of perfectly good film had been spoiled and valuable time wasted. The players got to their feet again unhurt, and the watching crowd shouted with laughter. Sahwah was ready to die of chagrin and mortification. She had spoiled any chances she had ever had of making a favorable impression on Mr. Larue; but this was the least part of it. There in the crowd was Marie Lanning laughing herself sick at this fiasco of Sahwah's playing. Good-natured Mr. Chambers was trying to soothe the embarrassment of the Winnebagos and make them laugh by declaring he had lost his breath when he was knocked over and when he got it back he found it wasn't his, but Sahwah refused to be comforted. She had disgraced herself in the public eye. Breaking away from the group she ran through the crowd with averted face, in spite of calls to come back, and kept on running until she had reached the edge of the park and the street car line. Boarding a car, she went back to Onoway House, wishing miserably that she had never been born, or had died the winter before in the coasting accident. Her ambition to be a motion picture actress died a violent death right then and there. So the march of the Camp Fire Girls had to be done over again without Sahwah, and was consummated this time without accident.

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When Sahwah reached Onoway House she wished with all her heart that she hadn't come back there. She had done it mechanically, not knowing where else to go. At the time her only thought had been to get away from the crowd and from Mr. Larue; now she hated to face the Winnebagos. She was glad that no one was at home, for Mrs. Gardiner had taken Betty and Tom and Ophelia to see the play acted. As she went around the back of the house she came face to face with Mr. Smalley, who was just going up on the back porch. He seemed just as surprised to see her as she was to see him, so Sahwah thought, but he was friendly enough and asked if the Gardiners were at home. When Sahwah said no, he said, "Then possibly they wouldn't mind if you gave me what I wanted. I came over to see if they would lend me their wheel hoe, as mine is broken and will have to be sent away to be fixed, and I have a big job of hoeing that ought to be done to-day." Sahwah knew that Migwan would not refuse to do a neighborly kindness like that as long as they were not using the tool themselves, and willingly lent it to him.

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She was still in great distress of mind over the ridiculous incident of the morning and did not want to see the other girls when they came home. So taking a pillow and a book, she wandered down the river path to a quiet shady spot among the willows and spent the afternoon in solitude. When the other girls returned home Sahwah was nowhere to be found. This did not greatly surprise them, however, for they were used to her impetuous nature and knew she was hiding somewhere. Hinpoha and Gladys were up-stairs removing the dust of the road from their faces and hands when they heard a stealthy footstep overhead. "She's hiding in the attic!" said Hinpoha.

"She'll melt up there," said Gladys, "it must be like an oven. Let's coax her down and don't any of

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us say a word about the play. She must feel terrible about it.”

So it was agreed among the girls that no mention of Sahwah’s mishap should be made, and Hinpoha went to the foot of the attic stairs and called up: “Come on down, Sahwah, we’re all going out on the river.” There was no answer. Hinpoha called again: “Please come, Sahwah, we need you to steer the raft.” Still no answer. Hinpoha went up softly. She thought she could persuade Sahwah to come down if none of the others were around. But when she reached the top of the stairs there was no sign of Sahwah anywhere. The place was stifling, and Hinpoha gasped for breath. Sahwah must be hiding among the old furniture. Hinpoha moved things about, raising clouds of dust that nearly choked her, and calling to Sahwah. No answer came, and she did not find Sahwah hidden among any of the things. Gladys came up to see what was going on, followed by Migwan.

“She doesn’t seem to be up here after all,” said Hinpoha, pausing to take breath. “It’s funny; I certainly thought I heard someone up here.”

“Don’t you remember the time I thought I heard someone up here in the night and you said it was the noise made by rats or mice?” asked Migwan. “It was probably that same thing again.”

“It must have been,” said Hinpoha.

“Maybe it was the ghost of that Mrs. Waterhouse, who died before she had her attic cleaned, and comes back to move the furniture,” said Gladys. In spite of its being daylight an unearthly thrill went through the veins of the girls. The whole thing was so mysterious and uncanny. 102

Migwan was looking around the attic. “Who broke that window?” she asked, suddenly. The side window, the one near the Balm of Gilead tree, was shattered and lay in pieces on the floor.

“It wasn’t broken the day we brought Miss Mortimer up,” said Gladys. “It must have happened since then.”

“There must have been someone up here to-day,” said Migwan. “Do you suppose—” here she stopped.

“Suppose what?” asked Hinpoha.

“Do you suppose,” continued Migwan, “that Sahwah was up here and broke it accidentally and is afraid to show herself on account of it?”

“Maybe,” said Hinpoha, “but Sahwah’s not the one to try to cover up anything like that. She’d offer to pay for the damage and it wouldn’t worry her five minutes.”

“It may have been broken the night of the storm,” said Nyoda, who had arrived on the scene. “If I remember rightly, we opened it when Miss Mortimer was up here, and as it is only held up by a nail and a rope hanging down from the ceiling, it could easily have been torn loose in such a wind as that and slammed down against the casement and broken. We were so excited trying to cover up the plants that we did not hear the crash, if indeed, we could have heard it in that thunder at all.” 103

This seemed such a plausible explanation that the girls accepted it without question and dismissed the matter from their minds. Descending from the hot attic they went out on the river on the raft. As it drew near supper time they feared that Sahwah would stay away and miss her supper, and they knew that she would have to show herself sometime, so they determined to have it over with so Sahwah could eat her supper in peace. On the path along the river they found her handkerchief and knew that she was somewhere near the water. They called and called, but she did not answer. “I know what will bring her from her hiding-place,” said Nyoda. She unfolded her plan and the girls agreed. They poled the raft back to the landing-place and got on shore. Then they set Ophelia on the raft all alone and sent it down-stream, telling her to scream at the top of her voice as if she were frightened. Ophelia obeyed and set up such a series of ear-splitting shrieks as she floated down the river that it was hard to believe that she was not in mortal terror. The scheme worked admirably. Sahwah heard the screams and peered through the bushes to see what was happening. She saw Ophelia alone on the raft and no one else in sight, and thought, of course, that she was afraid and ran out to reassure her. She took hold of the tow line and pulled the raft back to the landing-place. 104

“Whatever made you so scared?” she asked, as Ophelia stepped on terra firma.

“Pooh, I wasn’t scared at all,” said Ophelia, grandly. “They told me to scream so you’d come out.” So Sahwah knew the trick that had been practised on her, but instead of being pleased to think that the girls wanted her with them so badly she was more irritated than before. There was no further use of hiding; she had to go into the house now and eat her supper with the rest. The meal was not such a trial for her as she had anticipated, because no one mentioned the subject of moving pictures, or acted as if anything had happened at all. After supper Nyoda brought out a magazine showing pictures of the Rocky Mountains and the girls gave this their strict attention. Nyoda read aloud the descriptions that went with the pictures. In one place she read: “The barren aspect of the hillside is due to a landslide which swept everything before it.”

At this Migwan’s thoughts went back to the scene on the hillside that day, when the human landslide was in progress. Now Migwan, in spite of her serious appearance, had a sense of humor which at times got the upper hand of her altogether. The memory of those figures rolling down the hill was too much for her and she dissolved abruptly into hysterical laughter. She vainly tried to control it and buried her face in her handkerchief, but it was no use. The harder she tried to stop laughing the harder she laughed. “Oh,” she gasped, “I never saw anything so funny as when 105

you rolled against Miss Mortimer and Mr. Chambers and knocked them off their feet."

After Migwan's hysterical outburst the rest could not restrain their laughter either, and Sahwah became the butt of all the humorous remarks that had been accumulating in the minds of the rest. If it had been anyone else but Migwan who had started them off, Sahwah would possibly have forgiven that one, but since selling her two plots to Mr. Larue Migwan had been holding her head pretty high. That Migwan had succeeded in her end of the motion picture business when she had failed in hers galled Sahwah to death and she fancied that Migwan was trying to "rub it in."

"I hope everything I do will cause you as much pleasure," she said stiffly. "I suppose nothing could make you happier than to see me do something ridiculous every day." Sahwah had slipped off her balance wheel altogether.

Migwan sobered up when she heard Sahwah's injured tone. She never dreamed Sahwah had taken the occurrence so much to heart. It was not her usual way. "Please don't be angry, Sahwah," she said, contritely. "I just couldn't help laughing. You know how light headed I am." 106

But Sahwah would have none of her apology. "I'll leave you folks to have as much fun over it as you please," she said coldly, rising and going up-stairs.

Migwan was near to tears and would have gone after her, but Nyoda restrained her. "Let her alone," she advised, "and she'll come out of it all the sooner."

Sahwah was herself again in the morning as far as the others were concerned, but she still treated Migwan somewhat coldly and it was evident that she had not forgiven her.

CHAPTER VIII.—A CANNING EPISODE. 107

Three times every week Migwan had been making the trip to town with a machine-load of vegetables, which was disposed of to an ever growing list of customers. Thanks to the early start the garden had been given by Mr. Mitchell, and the constant care it received at the hands of Migwan and her willing helpers, Migwan always managed to bring out her produce a day or so in advance of most of the other growers in the neighborhood and so could command a better price at first than she could have if she had arrived on the scene at flood tide. After every trip there was a neat little sum to put in the old cocoa can which Migwan used as a bank until there was enough accumulated to make a real bank deposit. The asparagus had passed beyond its vegetable days and had grown up in tall feathery shoots that made a pretty sight as they stood in a long row against the fence. The new strawberry plants had taken root and were growing vigorously; the cucumbers were thriving like fat babies. The squashes and melons were running a race, as Sahwah said, to see which could hold up the most fruit on their vines; the corn-stalks stood straight and tall, holding in their arms their firstborn, silky tassel-capped children, like proud young fathers. 108

But it was the tomato bed in which Migwan's dearest hopes were bound up. The frames sagged with exhaustion at the task of holding up the weight of crimsoning globes that hung on the vines. Migwan tended this bed as a mother broods over a favorite child, fingering over the leaves for loathsome tomato worms, spraying the plants to keep away diseases, and cultivating the ground around the roots. All suckers were ruthlessly snipped off as soon as they grew, so that the entire strength of the plants could go into the ripening of tomatoes. For it was on that tomato bed that Migwan's fortune depended. While the proceeds from the remainder of the garden were gratifying, they were not great enough to make up the sum which Migwan needed to go to college, as the vegetables were not raised in large enough quantities. Migwan carefully estimated the amount she would realize from the sale of the tomatoes and found that it would not be large enough, and decided she could make more out of them by canning them. At Nyoda's advice the Winnebagos formed themselves into a Canning Club, which would give them the right to use the 4H label, which stood for Head, Hand, Health and Heart, and was recognized by dealers in various places. According to the methods of the Canning Club they canned the tomatoes in tin cans, with tops neatly soldered on. After an interview with various hotels and restaurants in the city Nyoda succeeded in establishing a market for Migwan's goods, and the canning went on in earnest. The whole family were pressed into service, and for days they did nothing but peel from morning until night. 109

"I'm getting to be such an expert peeler," said Hinpoha, "that I automatically reach out in my sleep and start to peel Migwan."

Nyoda made up a gay little song about the peeling. To the tune of "Comrades, comrades, ever since we were boys," she sang, "Peeling, peeling, ever since 6 A.M."

Several places had asked for homemade ketchup and Migwan prepared to supply the demand. Never did a prize housekeeper, making ketchup for a county fair, take such pains as Migwan did with hers. She took care to use only the best spices and the best vinegar; she put in a few peach leaves from the tree to give it a finer flavor; she stood beside the big iron preserving kettle and stirred the mixture all the while it was boiling to be sure that it would not settle and burn. Everyone in the house had to taste it to be sure it found favor with a number of critical palates. "Wouldn't you like to put a few bay leaves into it?" asked her mother. "There are some in the 110

glass jar in the pantry. They are all crumbled and broken up fine, but they are still good." Migwan put a spoonful of the broken leaves into the ketchup; then she put another.

"Oh, I never was so tired," she sighed, when at last it had boiled long enough and she shoved it back.

"Let's all go out on the river," proposed Nyoda, "and forget our toil for awhile." Sahwah was the last out of the kitchen, having stopped to drink a glass of water, and while she was drinking her eye roved over the table and caught sight of half a dozen cloves that had spilled out of a box. Gathering them up in her hand she dropped them into the ketchup. Just then Migwan came back for something and the two went out together.

"And now for the bottling," said Migwan, when the supper dishes were put away, and she set several dozen shining glass bottles on the table. After she had been dipping up the ketchup for awhile she paused in her work to sit down for a few moments and count up her expected profits. "Let's see," she said, "forty bottles at fifteen cents a bottle is six dollars. That isn't so bad for one day's work. But I hope I don't have many days of such work," she added. "My back is about broken with stirring." About thirty of the bottles were filled and sealed when she took this little breathing spell.

111

"Let me have a taste," said Hinpoha, eyeing the brown mixture longingly.

"Help yourself," said Migwan. Hinpoha took a spoonful. Her face drew up into the most frightful puckers. Running to the sink she took a hasty drink of water. "What's the matter?" said Migwan, viewing her in alarm. "Did you choke on it?"

"Taste it!" cried Hinpoha. "It's as bitter as gall."

Migwan took a taste of the ketchup and looked fit to drop. "Whatever is the matter with it?" she gasped. One after another the girls tasted it and voiced their mystification. "It couldn't have spoiled in that short time," said Migwan.

Then she suddenly remembered having seen Sahwah drop something into the kettle as it stood on the back of the stove. Could it be possible that Sahwah was seeking revenge for having been made fun of? "Sahwah," she gasped, unbelievably, "did you put anything into the ketchup that made it bitter?"

"I did not," said Sahwah, the indignant color flaming into her face. She had already forgotten the incident of the cloves. She saw Nyoda and the other girls look at her in surprise at Migwan's words. Her temper rose to the boiling point. "I know what you're thinking," she said, fiercely. "You think I did something to the ketchup to get even with Migwan, but I didn't, so there. I don't know any more about it than you do."

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"I take it all back," said Migwan, alarmed at the tempest she had set astir, and bursting into tears buried her head on her arms on the kitchen table. All that work gone for nothing!

Sahwah ran from the room in a fearful passion. Nyoda tried to comfort Migwan. "It's a lucky thing we found it before the stuff was sold," she said, "or your trade would have been ruined." She and the other girls threw the ketchup out and washed the bottles.

"Whatever could have happened to it?" said Gladys, wonderingly.

Migwan lifted her face. "I want to tell you something, Nyoda," she said. "I suppose you wonder why I asked Sahwah if she had put anything in. Well, when I went back into the kitchen after my hat when we were going out on the river, Sahwah was there, and she was dropping something into the kettle."

"You don't mean it?" said Nyoda, incredulously. Nyoda understood Sahwah's blind impulses of passion, and she could not help noticing for the last few days that Sahwah was still nursing her wrath at Migwan for laughing at her, and she wondered if she could have lost control of herself for an instant and spoiled the ketchup.

Meanwhile Sahwah, up-stairs, had cooled down almost as rapidly as she had flared up, and began to think that she had been a little hasty in her outburst. She, therefore, descended the back stairs with the idea of making peace with the family and helping to wash the bottles. But halfway down the stairs she happened to hear Migwan's remark and Nyoda's answer, and the long silence which followed it. Immediately her fury mounted again to think that they suspected her of doing such an underhand trick. "They don't trust me!" she cried, over and over again to herself. "They don't believe what I said; they think I did it and told a lie about it." All night she tossed and nursed her sense of injury and by morning her mind was made up. She would leave this place where everyone was against her, and where even Nyoda mistrusted her. That was the most unkind cut of all.

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When she did not appear at the breakfast table the rest began to wonder. Betty reported that Sahwah had not been in bed when she woke up, which was late, and she thought she had risen and dressed and gone down-stairs without disturbing her. There was no sign of her in the garden or on the river. Both the rowboat and the raft were at the landing-place. There was an uncomfortable restraint at the breakfast table. Each one was thinking of something and did not want the others to see it. That thing was that Sahwah had a guilty conscience and was afraid to face the girls. Migwan's eyes filled with tears when she thought how her dear friend had injured her. A blow delivered by the hand of a friend is so much worse than one from an enemy. The table was always set the night before and the plates turned down.

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"What's this sticking out under Sahwah's plate?" asked Gladys. It was a note which she opened

and read and then sat down heavily in her chair. The rest crowded around to see. This was what they read: "As long as you don't trust me and think I do underhand things you will probably be glad to get rid of me altogether. Don't look for me, for I will never come back. You may give my place in the Winnebagos to someone else." It was signed "Sarah Ann Brewster," and not the familiar "Sahwah."

"Sahwah's run away!" gasped Migwan in distress, and the girls all ran up to her room. Her clothes were gone from their hooks and her suit-case was gone from under the bed. The girls faced each other in consternation.

"Do you think she had anything to do with the ketchup, after all?" asked Gladys, thoughtfully. "It was so unlike her to do anything of that kind."

"Then why did she run away?" asked Migwan, perplexed.

The morning passed miserably. They missed Sahwah at every turn. Several times the girls forgot themselves and sang out "O Sahwah!" Nyoda did not doubt for a moment that Sahwah had gone to her own home, but she thought it best not to go after her immediately. Sahwah's hot temper must cool before she would come to herself. Nyoda was puzzled at her conduct. If she had nothing to be ashamed of why had she run away? That was the question which kept coming up in her mind. Nothing went right in the house or the garden that day. Everyone was out of sorts. Migwan absent-mindedly pulled up a whole row of choice plants instead of weeds; Gladys ran the automobile into a tree and bent up the fender; Hinpoha slammed the door on her finger nail; Nyoda burnt her hand. Ophelia was just dressed for the afternoon in a clean, starched white dress when she fell into the river and had to be dressed over again from head to foot. The whole household was too cross for words. The departure of Sahwah was the first rupture that had ever occurred in the closely linked ranks of the Winnebagos and they were all broken up over it.

When Mrs. Gardiner was cooking beef for supper she told Migwan to get her some bay leaf to flavor it with. Migwan brought out the glass jar of crushed leaves. "That's not the bay leaf," said her mother, and went to look for it herself. "Here it is," she said, bringing another glass jar down from a higher shelf.

"Then what's this?" asked Migwan, indicating the first jar.

"I haven't the slightest idea," said Mrs. Gardiner. "It was in the pantry when we came."

"But this was what I put into the ketchup," said Migwan. Hastily unscrewing the top she shook out some of the contents and tasted them. Her mouth contracted into a fearful pucker. Never in her life had she tasted anything so bitter.

"I did it myself," she said, in a dazed tone. "I spoiled the ketchup myself." At her shout the girls came together in the kitchen to hear the story of the mistaken ingredient.

"What can that be?" they all asked. Nobody knew. It was some dried herb that had been left by the former mistress of the house, and a powerful one. The girls looked at each other blankly.

"And I accused Sahwah of doing it," said Migwan, remorsefully. "No wonder she flared up and left us, I don't blame her a bit. I wouldn't thank anyone for accusing me wrongfully of anything like that."

"We'll have to go after her this very evening," said Gladys, "and bring her back."

"If she'll come," said Hinpoha, knowing Sahwah's proud spirit.

"Oh, I'm quite willing to grovel in the dust at her feet," said Migwan.

Gladys drove them all into town with her and they sped to the Brewster house. It was all dark and silent. Sahwah was evidently not there. They tried the neighbors. They all denied that she had been near the house. They finally came to this conclusion themselves, for in the light of the street lamp just in front of the house they could see that the porch was covered with a month's accumulation of yellow dust which bore no footmarks but their own.

Here was a new problem. They had come expecting to offer profuse apologies to Sahwah and carry her back with them to Onoway House rejoicing, and it was a shock to find her gone. The thought of letting her go on believing that they mistrusted her was intolerable, but how were they going to clear matters up? Sahwah had no relatives in town, and, of course, they did not know all her friends, so it would be hard to find her. That is, if she had ever reached town at all. Something might have happened to her on the way—Nyoda and Gladys sought each other's eyes and each thought of what had happened to them on the way to Bates Villa.

With heavy hearts they rode back to Onoway House. The days went by cheerlessly. A week passed since Sahwah had run away, but no word came from her. Nyoda interviewed the conductors on the interurban car line to find out if Sahwah had taken the car into the city. No one remembered a girl of that description on the day mentioned. Sahwah had only one hat—a conspicuous red one—and she would not fail to attract attention. Thoroughly alarmed, Nyoda decided on a course of action. She called up the various newspapers in town and asked them to print a notice to the effect that Sahwah had disappeared. If Sahwah were in town she would see it and knowing that they were worried about her would let them know where she was. The notice came out in the papers, and a day or two passed, but there was no word from Sahwah. Nyoda and Gladys made a hurried trip to town to put the police on the track. Just before they got to the city limits they had a blowout and were delayed some time before they could go on. As they waited in the road another machine came along and the driver stopped and offered assistance. Nyoda recognized a friend of hers in the machine, a Miss Barnes, teacher in a local gymnasium.

"Hello, Miss Kent," she called, cheerfully, "I haven't seen you for an age. Where have you been keeping yourself?"

"Where have you been keeping yourself?" returned Nyoda.

"I, Oh, I'm working this summer," replied Miss Barnes. "I'm just in town on business. I'm helping to conduct a girls' summer camp on the lake shore. I thought possibly you would bring your Camp Fire group out there this summer. One of your girls is out there now."

"Which one?" asked Nyoda, thinking of Chapa and Nakwisi, whom she had heard talking about going.

"One by the name of Brewster," said Miss Barnes, "a regular mermaid in the water. She has the girls out there standing open-mouthed at her swimming and diving. Why, what's the matter?" she asked, as Nyoda gave a sigh of relief that seemed to come from her boots.

"Nothing," replied Nyoda, "only we've been scouring the town for that very girl."

"You have?" asked Miss Barnes, with interest. "Would you like to come out and visit her?"

"Could I?" asked Nyoda.

"Certainly," said Miss Barnes, "come right out with me now. I'm going back."

And so Sahwah's mysterious disappearance was cleared up. When the Winnebagos, lined up in the road, saw the automobile approaching, and that Sahwah was in it, they welcomed her back into their midst with a rousing Winnebago cheer that warmed her to the heart. All the clouds had been rolled away by Nyoda's explanations and this was a triumphant homecoming. A regular feast was spread for her, and as she ate she related her adventures since leaving the house early that other morning. Without forming any plan of where she was going she had walked up the road in the opposite direction of the car line and then a farmer had come along on a wagon and given her a lift. He had taken her all the way to the other car line, three miles below Onoway House. She had come into the city by this route. She did not want to go home for fear they would come after her, so she went to the Young Women's Christian Association. As she sat in the rest room wondering what she should do next she heard two girls talking about registering for camp. This seemed to her a timely suggestion, and she followed them to the registration desk and registered for two weeks. She went out that same day. When she arrived there she did such feats in the water that they asked her if she would not stay all summer and help teach the girls to swim. She said she would, and so saw a very easy way out of her difficulty. The reason they had not heard from her when they put the notice in the papers was because they did not get the city papers in camp.

Sahwah surveyed the faces around the table with a beaming countenance. After all, she could only be entirely happy with the Winnebagos. Migwan and she were once more on the best of terms.

"But tell us," said Hinpoha, now that this was safe ground to tread upon, "what it was you put into the ketchup."

"Oh," said Sahwah, who now remembered all about it, "those were a couple of cloves that were lying on the table."

And so the last bit of mystery was cleared up.

CHAPTER IX.—OPHELIA DANCES THE SUN DANCE.

Among the other books at Onoway House there was a Manual of the Woodcraft Indians which belonged to Sahwah, and which she was very fond of quoting and reading to the other girls when they were inclined to hang back at some of the expeditions she proposed. One night she read aloud the chapter about "dancing the sun dance," that is, becoming sunburned from head to foot without blistering. On a day not long after this Ophelia might have been seen standing beside the river clad only in a thin, white slip. Stepping from the bank, she immersed herself in the water, then stood in the sun, holding out her arms and turning up her face to its glare. When the blazing August sunlight began to feel uncomfortably warm on her body she plunged into the cooling flood and then came up to stand on the bank again. She did this straight through for two hours, and then began to investigate the result. Her arms were a beautiful brilliant red, and the length of leg that extended out from the slip was the same shade. She felt wonderfully pleased, and dipped in the water again and again to cool off and then returned to the burning process. When the dinner bell rang she returned to the house, eager to show her achievement. But she did not feel so enthusiastic now as when she first beheld her scarlet appearance. Something was wrong. It seemed as if she were on fire from head to foot. She looked at her arms. They were no longer such a pretty red; they had swelled up in large, white blisters. So had her legs. She could hardly see out of her eyes.

"Ophelia!" gasped the girls, when she came into the house. "What has happened? Have you been scalded?"

"I've been doing your old Sun Dance," said Ophelia, painfully.

Never in all their lives had they seen such a case of sunburn. Every inch of her body was covered with blisters as big as a hand. The sun had burned right through the flimsy garment she wore. There was a pattern around her neck where the embroidery had left its trace. She screamed every time they tried to touch her. Nyoda worked quickly and deftly and the luckless sun dancer was wrapped from head to foot in soft linen bandages until she looked like a mummy.

Sahwah sought Nyoda in tribulation. "Was it my fault," she asked, "for reading her that book? She never would have thought of it if I hadn't given her the idea."

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"No," answered Nyoda, "it wasn't your fault. It said emphatically in the book that the coat of tan should be acquired gradually. You couldn't foresee that she would stand in the sun that way. So don't worry about it any longer."

"Still, I feel in a measure responsible," said Sahwah, "and I ought to be the one to take care of her. Let me sleep in the room with her to-night and get up if she wants anything." Sahwah's desire to help was so sincere that she insisted upon being allowed to do it, and took upon herself all the care of the sunburned Ophelia, which was no small job, for the pain from the blisters made her frightfully cross.

Nyoda was surprised to see Sahwah keeping at it with such persistent good nature and apparent success, for as a rule she was not a good one to take care of the sick; she was in too much of a hurry. She would generally spill the water when she was trying to give a drink to her patient, or fall over the rug, or drop dishes; and the effect she produced was irritating rather than soothing. But in this case she seemed to be making a desperate effort to do things correctly so she would be allowed to continue, and fetched and carried all the afternoon in obedience to Ophelia's whims. She read her stories to while away the painful hours and when supper time came made her a wonderful egg salad in the form of a water lily, and cut sandwiches into odd shapes to beguile her into eating them. When evening came and Ophelia was restless and could not go to sleep she sang to her in her clear, high voice, songs of camp and firelight. One by one the Winnebagos drifted in and joined their voices to hers in a beautifully blended chorus.

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"Gee, that's what it must be like in heaven," sighed the child of the streets, as she listened to them. The Winnebagos smiled tenderly and sang on until she dropped off to sleep.

Sahwah slept with one eye open listening for a call from Ophelia. She heard her stirring restlessly in the night and went over and sat beside her. "Can't you sleep?" she asked.

"No," complained Ophelia. "Say, will you tell me that story again?"

Sahwah began, "Once upon a time there was a little girl and she had a fairy godmother——"

"What's a fairy godmother?" interrupted Ophelia.

"Oh," said Sahwah, "it's somebody who looks after you especially and is very good to you and grants all your wishes, and always comes when you're in trouble——"

"Who's my fairy godmother?" demanded Ophelia.

"I don't know," said Sahwah.

"I bet I haven't got any!" said Ophelia, suspiciously. "I didn't have a father and mother like the rest of the kids and I bet I haven't got any fairy godmother either."

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"Oh, yes, you have," said Sahwah to soothe her, "you have one only you haven't seen her yet. Wait and she'll appear." But Ophelia lay with her face to the wall and said no more. "Would you like me to bring you a drink?" asked Sahwah, a few minutes later. Ophelia replied with a nod and Sahwah went down to the kitchen. There was no drinking water in sight and Sahwah hesitated about going out to the well at that time of the night. Then she remembered that a pail of well water had been taken down cellar that evening to keep cool. Taking a light she descended the cellar stairs. When she was nearly to the bottom she heard a subdued crash, like a basket of something being thrown over, followed by a series of small bumping sounds. She stood stock still, afraid to move off the step.

Then, summoning her voice, she cried, "Who is down there?" No answer came from the darkness below. After that first crash there was not another sound. Sahwah was not naturally timid, and her one explanation for all night noises in a house was rats. Besides, she had started after water for Ophelia, and she meant to get it. She went down stairs and looked all around with her light. She soon found the thing which had made the noise. It was a basket of potatoes which had fallen over and as the potatoes rolled out on the cement floor they had made those odd little after noises which had puzzled her. Satisfied that nobody was in the house she took her pail of water and went up-stairs, glad that she had not roused the house and brought out a laugh against herself.

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She gave Ophelia the drink, and being feverish she drank it eagerly and murmured gratefully, "I guess you're my fairy godmother." As Sahwah turned to go to bed Ophelia thrust out a bandaged hand and caught hold of her gown. "Stay with me," she said, and Sahwah sat down again beside the bed until Ophelia fell asleep. Sahwah felt pleased and elated at being chosen by Ophelia as the one she wanted near her. It was not often that a child singled Sahwah out from the group as an object of affection; they usually went to Gladys or Hinpoha. So she responded quickly to the advances made by Ophelia and thenceforth made a special pet of her, taking her part on all occasions.

Soon after Ophelia's experience with sunburn a rainy spell set in which lasted a week. Every day they were greeted by grey skies and a steady downpour, fine for the parched garden, but hard on

amusements. They played card games until they were weary of the sight of a card; they played every other game they knew until it palled on them, and on the fifth day of rain they surrounded Nyoda and clamored for something new to do. Nyoda scratched her head thoughtfully and asked if they would like to play Thieves' Market.

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"Play what?" asked Gladys.

"Thieves' Market," said Nyoda. "You know in Mexico there is an institution known as the Thieves' Market, where stolen goods are sold to the public. We will not discuss the moral aspect of the business, but I thought we could make a game out of it. Let's each get a hold of some possession of each one of the others' without being seen and put a price on it. The price will not be a money value, of course, but a stunt. The owner of the article will have first chance at the stunt and if she fails the thing will go to whoever can buy it. If anyone fails to get a possession from each one of the rest to add to the collection she can't play, and if she is seen by the owner while 'stealing' it she will have to put it back. We'll hold the Thieves' Market to-night after supper in the parlor and I'll be storekeeper."

The Winnebagos, always on the lookout for something novel and entertaining, seized on the idea with rapture. The rain was forgotten that afternoon as they scurried around the house trying to seize upon articles belonging to the others, and at the same time trying valiantly to guard their own possessions. It was not hard to get Sahwah's things, for she had a habit of leaving them lying all over the house. Her red hat had fallen a victim the first thing; likewise her shoes and tennis racket. It was harder to get anything away from Nyoda, for she seemed to be Argus eyed; but providentially she was called to the telephone, and while she was talking they made their raid.

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When opened, the Thieves' Market presented such a conglomeration of articles that at first the girls could only stand and wonder how those things had ever been taken away from them without their knowing it, for many of them were possessions which were usually hidden from sight while the owners fondly believed that their existence was unknown. Migwan gave a cry of dismay when she beheld her "Autobiography," which she was carefully keeping a secret from the rest, out in full view on the table. "How did you ever find it?" she gasped. "It was folded up in my clothes."

But Migwan's embarrassment was nothing compared to Nyoda's when she caught sight of a certain photograph. She blushed scarlet while the girls teased her unmercifully. It was a picture of Sherry, the serenader of the camp the summer before. Until they found the photograph the girls did not know that Nyoda was corresponding with him. And the prices on the various things were the funniest of all. The girls had come down that evening dressed in their middies and bloomers for they had a suspicion that there would be some acrobatic stunts taking place, and it was well that they did. To redeem her hat Sahwah had to stand on her head and to get her bedroom slippers Gladys had to jump through a hoop from a chair. Hinpoha had to wrestle with Nyoda for the possession of her paint box, and the price of Betty's shoes was to throw them over her shoulder into a basket. At the first throw she knocked a vase off the table, but luckily it did not break, and she was warned that another accident would result in her going shoeless. Migwan tremblingly approached the Autobiography to find out the price. It was "Read one chapter aloud." "I won't do it," said Migwan, flatly.

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"Next customer," cried Nyoda, pounding with her hammer. "For the simple price of reading aloud one chapter I will sell this complete autobiography of a pious life, profusely illustrated by the author." Sahwah hastened up to "buy" the book, but Migwan headed her off in a hurry and read the first chapter with as good grace as she could, amid the cheers and applause of the other customers. Sahwah made a grimace when she had to polish the shoes of everyone present to get her shoe brush back.

Thus the various articles in the Thieves' Market were disposed of amid much laughter and merry-making, until there remained but one article, a cold chisel. Nyoda went through the usual formula, offering it for sale, but no one came to claim it. She redoubled her pleas, but with the same result. "For the third and last time I offer this great bargain in a cold chisel for the simple price of jumping over three chairs in succession," she said, with a flourish. Nobody appeared to be anxious to redeem their property. "Whose is it?" she asked, mystified.

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It apparently belonged to no one. "It's yours, Gladys," said Sahwah, "I stole it from you."

"Mine?" asked Gladys, in surprise. "I don't own any chisel. Where did you get it from?"

"Out of the automobile," answered Sahwah.

"But it doesn't belong there," said Gladys. "There's no chisel among the tools. You're joking, you found it somewhere else."

"No, really," said Sahwah, "I found it in the car this afternoon."

"Mother," called Migwan, "were there any tools left in the barn by Mr. Mitchell?"

"Nothing but the garden tools," answered her mother. Tom also denied any knowledge of the chisel.

"Girls," said Nyoda, seriously, "there is something going on here that I do not understand. First Migwan thought she heard footsteps in the attic; then a ghost appeared to me in the tepee; one night we saw a man running out of the barn, and later on that night Migwan claims to have run into a man in the garden. Soon afterward Hinpoha was sure she heard footsteps in the attic, and when we went up we found the window broken. Just a few nights ago a basket of potatoes was mysteriously knocked over in the cellar in the middle of the night, and now we find a chisel in the

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automobile which does not belong to us. It looks for all the world as if somebody were trying to break into this house, in fact, has broken in on a number of occasions."

Migwan shrieked and covered up her ears. "A mystery!" said Sahwah, theatrically. "How thrilling!" The interest in the Thieves' Market died out before this new and alarming idea.

"It may be only a remarkable series of co-incidences," said Nyoda, seeing the fright of the girls, "but it certainly looks suspicious. That window may possibly have been broken by the wind during the storm, and the footsteps may have been rats or Mrs. Waterhouse's ghost, and the ghost in the tepee may have been a practical joker, but baskets of potatoes do not fall over of their own accord in the middle of the night and cold chisels don't grow in automobiles. There's something wrong and we ought to find out what it is."

"Oh, I'll never go up-stairs alone again," shuddered Migwan. "Sahwah, how did you ever dare go down cellar in the dark after you heard that noise?" And she shivered violently at the very thought.

"Tom, can you handle a gun?" asked Nyoda.

"Yes," answered Tom.

"I'm going to buy a little automatic pistol to-morrow," said Nyoda, "and teach everyone of you girls how to shoot it."

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"I wonder if we hadn't better try to get Calvin Smalley to sleep in the house," said Migwan.

"I can take care of you," said Tom, proudly. Nothing else was talked of for the remainder of the evening and when bed time came there was a general reluctance to become separated from the rest of the household. But, although they listened for footsteps in the attic they heard nothing, and the night passed away peacefully.

The next night the ghost became active again. Whether it was the same one or a different one they did not find out, however, for they did not see it this time, only heard it. Just about bed time it was, a strange, weird moaning sound that filled the house and echoed through the big halls. Whether it proceeded from the basement or the attic they were unable to make out; it seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere. Migwan clung close to her mother and trembled. The sound rang out again, more weird than before. It was bloodcurdling. Nyoda opened the window and fired several shots into the air. The moaning sound stopped abruptly and was heard no more that night, but sleep was out of the question. The girls were too excited and fearful. The next day Mrs. Gardiner advised everybody to hide their valuables away. The peaceful life at Onoway House was broken up. The household lived in momentary expectation of something happening. "And this is the quiet of the country," sighed Migwan, "where I was to grow fat and strong. I'm worn to a frazzle worrying about this mystery."

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"So'm I," said Gladys.

"And I'm getting thin," said Hinpoha, which brought out a general laugh.

"Not so you could notice it," said Sahwah. Whereupon Hinpoha tried to smother her with a pillow and the two rolled over on the bed, struggling.

As if worrying about a burglar were not enough, Sahwah and Gladys had another exciting experience one day that week. If we were to stretch a point and trace things back to their beginnings it was the fault of the Winnebagos themselves, for if they hadn't gone horseback riding that day— Well, Farmer Landsdowne came over in the morning and said he had a pair of horses which were not working and if they wanted to go horseback riding now was their chance. The girls were delighted with the idea and flew to don bloomers. None of them had ever ridden before and excitement ran high. Naturally there were no saddles, for Farmer Landsdowne's horses were not ridden as a general rule, and the girls had to ride bareback.

"It feels like trying to straddle a table," said Migwan, marveling at the width of the horse she was on. "My legs aren't half long enough." She clung desperately to his mane as he began to trot and she began to slide all over him. "He's so slippery I can't stick on," she gasped. The horse stopped abruptly as she jerked on the reins and she slid off as if he had been greased, and landed in the soft grass beside the road.

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"Here, let me try," said Sahwah, impatient for her turn. "He isn't either slippery," she said, when she got on, "he's bony, horribly bony. He's just like knives." She jolted up and down a few times on his hip bones and an idea jolted into her head. Getting off she ran into the house and came out again with a sofa pillow, which she proceeded to tie on his back. Then she rode in comparative comfort, amid the laughter of the girls.

Calvin Smalley, who happened to be working out in front and saw her ride past, doubled up with laughter over his vegetable bed. "What next?" he chuckled. "What next?" He was still thinking about this and laughing over it when he went through the empty field which Sahwah had crossed the time she had discovered the house among the trees, and where Abner Smalley now pastured his bull. So absorbed was he in the memory of that ridiculous pillow tied on the horse that he was not careful in putting up the bars behind him when he left the field, and later in the afternoon the bull wandered over in that direction and came through into the next field. He found the river road and followed it and began to graze in one of the unploughed fields belonging to Onoway House.

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Sahwah, wearing her big, red hat, was bending low over the ground, digging up some ferns which grew there, when all of a sudden she heard a loud snort and looked up to see the bull

charging down upon her. She looked wildly around for a place of safety. Nothing was nearer than the far-off hedge that surrounded the cultivated garden patch. Not a tree, not a fence, in sight. Quick as light she bounded off toward the hedge, although she knew it would be impossible for her to reach it before the bull would be upon her.

Gladys, coming along the road in the automobile, heard a shriek and looked up to see Sahwah tearing across the open field with the bull hard after her. Without a moment's hesitation Gladys turned the car into the field and started after the bull at full speed. She let the car out every notch and it whizzed dizzily over the hard turf. She sounded the horn again and again with the hope of attracting the attention of the bull, but he did not pause. Like lightning she bore down upon him, passed to one side and slowed down for a second beside Sahwah, who jumped on the running-board and was borne away to safety.

"This hum-drum, uneventful life," said Sahwah, as she sat on the porch half an hour afterward and tried to catch her breath, while the rest fanned her with palm leaf fans, "is getting a little too much for me!"

CHAPTER X.—A BIRTHDAY PARTY

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After Nyoda had fired the shots out of the window, nothing was heard or seen of the ghost and the footsteps in the attic ceased. "It's just as I thought," said Nyoda, "someone has been trying to frighten us with a possible view of robbing the house at some time, thinking that a houseful of women would be terror-stricken at the ghostly noises, but when he found we had a gun and could shoot he thought better of the plan." Gradually the girls lost their fright, and the odd corners of Onoway House regained their old charm. They were far too busy with the canning to think of much else, for the tomatoes were ripening in such large quantities that it was all they could do to dispose of them. The 4H brand found favor and the market gradually increased, and every week Migwan had a goodly sum to deposit in the bank after the cost of the tin cans had been deducted.

"I have to laugh when I think of that honor in the book," said Migwan, "can at least three cans of fruit," and she pointed to the cans stacked on the back porch ready to be packed into the automobile and taken to town. "Why, hello, Calvin," she said, as Calvin Smalley appeared at the back door. "Come in." Calvin came in and sat down. "What's the matter?" asked Migwan, for his face had a frightened and distressed look.

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"Uncle Abner has turned me out!" said Calvin.

"Turned you out!" echoed the girls. "Why?"

"He showed me a will last night," said Calvin, "a later one than that which was found when my grandfather died, which left the farm to him instead of to my father. He just found it last night when he was rummaging among grandfather's old papers. According to that I have been living on his charity all these years instead of on my own property as I supposed and now he says he can't afford to keep me any longer. He wanted me to sign a paper saying that I would work for him without pay until I was thirty years old to make up for what I have had all these years, and when I wouldn't do it he told me to get out."

"How can any man be so mean and stingy!" said Migwan, indignantly.

"And what do you intend to do now?" asked Mrs. Gardiner.

"I don't know," said Calvin, looking utterly downcast and discouraged. "I had expected to go through school and then to agricultural college and be a scientific farmer, but that's out of the question now. I haven't a cent in the world. I could hire out to some of the farmers around here, I suppose, but you know what that means—they wouldn't pay me much because I'm a boy, but they would get a man's work out of me and it's precious little time I'd have for school. I've always saved Uncle Abner the cost of one hired man in return for what he gave me, so I don't feel under any obligations to him. I think I'll give up farming for a while and go to the city and work. The trouble is I have no friends there and it might be hard for me to get into a good place." His honest eyes were clouded over with perplexity and trouble.

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"My father could probably get you a job in the city," said Gladys, "if you can wait until he gets back. He's out west now."

"I tell you what to do," said kind-hearted Mrs. Gardiner to Calvin, "you stay here with us until Mr. Evans comes back. You can help the girls in the garden, and we were wishing not long ago that we had another man in the house."

"You are very kind," said Calvin, gratefully, "but I don't want to put you to any trouble."

"No trouble at all," Mrs. Gardiner assured him, "you can sleep with Tom." The girls all expressed pleasure at the prospect of having Calvin stay at Onoway House and under the spell of their kindly hospitality his drooping spirits revived. He shook the dust of his uncle's house from his feet, feeling no longer an outcast, since he had suddenly found such kind friends on the other side of the hedge.

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Calvin lived in a perpetual state of wonder at the girls at Onoway House. They made a frolic out of everything they did and were continually thinking up new and amazing games to play. Calvin

had never done anything at home all his life but work, and work was a serious business to him. He never knew before that work was fun. The long, weary hours of peeling were enlivened with songs made up on the spur of the moment. Sahwah would look up from the pan over which she was bending, and sing to the tune of "The Pope":

"Our Migwan leads a jolly life, jolly life,
She peels tomatoes with her knife, with her knife,
And puts the pieces in the can,
And leaves the peelings in the pan, (Oh, tra la la)."

And then they would all start to sing at once,

"The tomatoes went in one by one,
(There's one more bushel to peel),
Hinpoha she did cut her thumb,
(There's one more bushel to peel)."

"The tomatoes went in two by two,
And Gladys and Sahwah fell into the stew.
The tomatoes went in three by three,
And Migwan got drowned a-trying to see."

etc., etc., thus they made merry over the work until it was done.

"Do you know," said Migwan, looking up from her peeling, "that it's Gladys's birthday next Friday? We ought to have a celebration."

"How about a picnic?" asked Nyoda. "We haven't had a real one yet. Have the rest of the Winnebagos come out from town and all of us sleep in the tepee as we had planned on the Fourth of July. Then we'll get a horse and wagon and drive along the roads until we come to a place beside the river where we want to stop and cook our dinner and just spend the day like gypsies." The girls entered into the plan with enthusiasm, both for the sake of celebrating Gladys's birthday and cheering up Calvin, who had been rather quiet and pensive of late. It was a great disappointment to him to have to give up his plans for going to college, and his uncle's unfriendly treatment of him had cut him to the heart.

Medmangi and Chapa and Nakwisi arrived the day before the picnic and the house echoed with the sound of voices and laughter, as the Winnebagos bubbled over with joy at being all together. The morning of the picnic was as fine as they could wish, and it was not long before they were bumping over the road in one of Farmer Landsdowne's wagons, behind the very two horses which the girls had ridden the week before. It was a wagon full. Sahwah sat up in front and drove like a veritable daughter of Jehu, with Farmer Landsdowne up beside her to come to the rescue in case the horses should run away, which was not at all likely, as it took constant persuasion to keep them going even at an easy jog trot. Mrs. Landsdowne, who, with her husband, had been invited to the picnic, sat beside Mrs. Gardiner, in the back of the wagon, while Calvin Smalley stayed next to Migwan, as he usually did. She was so quiet and gentle and kind that he felt more at ease with her than with the rest of the Winnebagos, who were such jokers. Ophelia, who was beginning to be inseparable from Sahwah, squeezed herself in between her and Mr. Landsdowne, and refused to move. Sahwah, of course, took her part and let her stay, although she was a bit crowded for space. Hinpoha and Gladys sat at the back of the wagon dangling their feet over the end, where they could watch the yellow road unwinding like a ribbon beneath them, while Nyoda sat between Betty and Tom to keep the peace.

"Where are we going?" asked Mrs. Gardiner, as they swung along the road.

"Oh," replied Sahwah, "somewhere, anywhere, everywhere, nowhere. It's lots more romantic to start out without any idea where you're going and stop wherever it suits you than to start out for a certain place and think you have to go there even if you pass nicer places on the road. Maybe, like Mrs. Wiggs, we'll end up at a first-class fire."

"We undoubtedly will," said Nyoda, "if we expect to cook any dinner. Do my eyes deceive me?" she continued, "or is this a fishing-rod under the straw? It is, it is," she cried, drawing it out. "Now I know what has been the matter with me for the past few months, this feeling of sadness and longing that was not akin to rheumatism. I have been pining, languishing, wasting away with a desire to go fishing. My early life ran quiet beside a babbling brook, and there I sat and fished trout and fried them over an outdoor fire. This spirit will never know repose until it has gone fishing once more."

"Take the rod and welcome, it's mine," said Calvin, glad that something of his should give pleasure to one of his cherished friends.

In a shady grove of sycamores beside the river they dismounted from the wagon and scattered in search of firewood, for the fire must be started the first thing, as there were potatoes to roast. Nyoda took the fishing-rod and started for the river. "We'll never get anything to eat if we wait until you catch enough fish for dinner," said Sahwah.

"Who said I was going to catch enough for dinner?" said Nyoda. "I wouldn't be cruel enough to keep you waiting all that time. But I do want to catch just one for old times' sake." She strolled down to the water's edge and after a few minutes Mr. Landsdowne joined her. He liked Nyoda and enjoyed a talk with her.

"Are you going to play all alone at the picnic?" he asked, as he dropped down beside her.

"Alone, but with *unbaited* zeal," she quoted, digging around in the ground with her stick. "Come and help me find a worm."

"I'm afraid the Early Bird got them all," she said plaintively, after a few moment's fruitless search. By dint of much digging they finally unearthed one and baited the hook. Nyoda cast her line and then settled down to a spell of silent waiting. "I don't believe there's a fish in this old river," she said impatiently, after fifteen minutes of angling which brought no results. "Not here, anyway. Let's go down beyond the bend where the river widens out into that broad pool. The water is deeper and quieter there." They moved on to the new location and Nyoda tried her luck again. This time success crowned her efforts and she landed a small fish almost immediately. "What did I tell you?" she exclaimed, triumphantly. "There's luck in changing places. Now for another one." In a few moments she felt a tug at the line. "It must be a whale," she cried, enthusiastically, "it pulls so hard."

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"It may be caught on a snag," said Farmer Landsdowne. "Here, let me get it loose for you, I'm afraid you'll break that rod," he said, as the pole bent ominously in her hands.

"Spare the rod and spoil the fish," said Nyoda.

"What are you doing on my property?" said a harsh voice behind them, "don't you see that sign?"

Nyoda and Farmer Landsdowne sprang to their feet in surprise and faced an irate farmer in blue shirt sleeves. Sure enough, on a tree not very far from them there was a sign reading,

NO FISHING IN THIS POND.

"We didn't see the sign," said Nyoda, stammering in her embarrassment, and crimson to the roots of her hair.

"We really didn't," confirmed Farmer Landsdowne.

"Well, ye see it now, don't ye?" pursued the proprietor of the fish-pond. "Kindly move along."

"We have one fish," said Nyoda, feeling unutterably foolish, "but we'll pay you for that. I must have one to take back to the picnic or I don't dare show my face."

"Ye say ye caught a fish?" shouted the farmer, excitedly. "Holy mackerel! That was the only one in the pond—I put it in there this morning—and I've rented the fishing of it to a young feller from Cleveland at twenty-five cents an hour."

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"But it didn't take me an hour to catch him," said Nyoda. "It only took five minutes. That'll be about two cents." But the farmer held out for his twenty-five cents and Nyoda paid it, laughing to herself at the way the "feller from Cleveland" had been cheated out of his sport.

"Don't ever tell the girls about this," pleaded Nyoda, as they moved shamefacedly away. "I'm supposed to be a pattern of conduct, and I'm always scolding the girls because they don't use their eyes enough. They'll never get over laughing at me if they find it out." Farmer Landsdowne promised solemnly that he would not divulge the secret.

"Did you catch anything?" called Sahwah, as Nyoda returned to the group under the trees.

"We certainly did," replied Nyoda, with a sidelong glance at Farmer Landsdowne.

"Listen to this part of father's last letter," said Gladys, as they sat around on the grass eating their dinner. "Juneau, Alaska.

"We recently saw a group of Camp Fire girls holding a Ceremonial Meeting on a mountain near Juneau. It fairly made us homesick; it reminded us so much of the group we used to see in our house. We went up and spoke to them and they send you this three-petaled flower as a greeting."

"To think we have friends all over the country, just because we know the meaning of the word Wohelo!" said Migwan in an awed tone, as the Winnebagos crowded around Gladys to see the flower which had come from far off Alaska, a silent All Hail from kindred spirits.

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Just at this point Ophelia, who was coming a long way with the coffee-pot in her hand, tripped over a root and sprawled on her face on the ground, showering everybody near her with coffee. "We have your title now," said Nyoda, "it's Ophelia-Face-in-the-Mud. You're always falling that way."

"And I know what your name is," replied Ophelia.

"What is it?" asked Nyoda, guilelessly.

"It's Nyoda-Chased-by-a-Farmer," said Ophelia.

Nyoda started and looked guilty. "How did you know that?" she asked, giving herself away completely.

"Followed you," said Ophelia. "I saw you fishin' where the sign said to keep out and the man in the blue shirt sleeves chased you out."

"Tell us about it," demanded all the girls, and Nyoda had to tell the whole story that she wanted to keep a secret.

"Fishy, fishy in the brook,
But the fishers 'got the hook,'"

chanted Sahwah, teasingly. Nyoda and Farmer Landsdowne looked sheepish at the jokes that were thrown at them thick and fast, but they stood it good-naturedly.

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"A truce!" cried Gladys, coming to the rescue of Nyoda. "Let's play charades."

"Good!" said Migwan. "You be leader of one side and let Nyoda take the other. Whichever side gives up first will have to get supper for the rest."

Gladys chose Sahwah, Mrs. Gardiner, Betty, Ophelia, Tom and Calvin. Nyoda chose Mr. and Mrs. Landsdowne, Hinpoha, Migwan, Chapa, Medmangi and Nakwisi. Gladys's side went out first and came in without her.

"Word of three syllables, first syllable," said Sahwah, who acted as spokesman. The whole company sat down in a row, striking the most doleful attitude and groaning as if in pain, and shedding tears into their handkerchiefs.

"Most woeful looking crowd I ever saw," remarked Mr. Landsdowne.

"Woe!" shouted Nyoda, triumphantly, and the guess was correct.

The weepers continued their weeping in the second syllable, and then Gladys appeared, felt of all their pulses and gave each a dose out of a bottle, whereupon they all straightened up, lost their symptoms of distress, and capered for joy.

"Cure," said Migwan. The players shook their heads.

"Heal," shouted Hinpoha, and Gladys acknowledged it.

In the last syllable Gladys went around and demanded payment for her services, but in each case was met with a promise to pay at some future time.

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"Owe," said Chapa, which was pronounced right. "O heal woe, what's that?" she asked.

"You're twisted," said Nyoda, "it's 'Wohelo.' That really was too easy. Let's not divide them into syllables after this," she suggested, "it's no contest of wits that way. Let's act out the word all at once." The alteration was accepted with enthusiasm.

Hinpoha came out alone for her side. "Word of two syllables," she said. Taking a blanket she spread it over a bushy weed and tucked the corners under until it looked not unlike a large stone. Then she retired from the scene. Soon Nyoda came along and paused in front of the blanket, which looked like an inviting seat.

"What a lovely rock to rest on!" she exclaimed, and seated herself upon it. Of course, it flattened down under her weight and she was borne down to the ground.

A moment of silence followed this performance as the guessers racked their brains for the meaning. "Is it 'Landsdowne?'" asked Gladys.

"It might be, but it isn't," said Nyoda, laughing.

"I know," said Sahwah, starting up, "it's 'shamrock.'"

"You are sharper than I thought," said Nyoda, rising from her seat. "Nobody down yet. Now, fire your broadside at us. No word under three syllables. Anything less would be unworthy of our giant intellects."

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"Third round!" cried Calvin.

Sahwah walked down to the water's edge, holding in her hand a large key. Leaning over, she moved the key as if it were walking in the water. This proved a puzzler, and cries of 'Milwaukee,' 'Nebrasky,' and 'turnkey' were all met with a triumphant shake of the head.

"It looks as if we would have to give up," said Hinpoha.

Just then Nyoda sprang up with a shout. "Why didn't I think of it before?" she cried. "It's 'Keewaydin,' key-wade-in. What else could you expect from Sahwah?"

"That's it," said Sahwah. "You must be a mind reader."

"Here's where we finish you off," said Nyoda, as her side came out again. "We've taken a word of four syllables this time." The whole team advanced in single file, Indian fashion, keeping closely in step. Round and round they marched, back and forth, never slackening their speed, until one by one they tumbled to the ground from sheer exhaustion and stiffened out lifelessly. The guessers looked at each other, puzzled.

"Do it again," said Sahwah. The strenuous march was repeated, and the marchers succumbed as before. Still no light came to the onlookers. Sahwah whispered something to Gladys.

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"Would you just as soon do it again?" asked Gladys. Again the file wound round the trees and tumbled to the turf. Nyoda made a triumphant grimace as no guess was forthcoming. Sahwah's eyes began to sparkle.

"Would you please do it once more?" she pleaded.

"Have mercy on the performers," groaned Nyoda, but they went through it again, and this time they were too spent to rise from the ground when the acting was done. "Do you give up?" called Nyoda.

"No," answered Gladys.

"You have five seconds to produce the answer, then," said Nyoda.

"It's diapason," said Gladys, "die-a-pacin."

"Really!" said Nyoda, falling back in astonishment.

"We knew it all the while!" cried Sahwah and Gladys. "We just kept you doing it over and over again because we liked to see you work."

The laugh was on Nyoda and her team all the way around. "We do this to each other!" called Sahwah, using the Indian form of taunt when one has played a successful trick on another.

"Tie the villains to a tree, and let them perish of mosquito bites," Nyoda commanded in an awful tone. "I'll get even with you for that, Miss Sahwah," she said, darkly, as the other side trooped off to cook up a new poser. 151

"Hadn't you better stop playing now?" inquired Mrs. Gardiner. "You know we wanted to get home before dark."

"Oh, let's do one more," pleaded Migwan. If they had only stopped playing when Mrs. Gardiner suggested it and gone home early they might have been in time to prevent the thing which occurred, but they were bent on seeing one side or the other go down, and Gladys's side prepared another charade.

"We've played up to your own game," said Gladys, who was introducing the new charade, "and have increased the number to five syllables." The actors were Mrs. Gardiner, Betty and Tom Gardiner. Mrs. Gardiner was scolding the children and emphasized her remarks by a sharp pinch on Tom's arm. Betty, seeing the maternal hand also extended in her direction, promptly climbed a tree and sat in safety, while her mother shook her finger at her and cried warningly, "I'll attend to you after awhile."

"What on earth?" said Nyoda, scratching her head in perplexity. But scratch as she might, no answer came, and the rest of her team had nothing to offer either. After holding out for fully fifteen minutes they were compelled to give it up. 152

"It's 'manipulator,'" cried the winning side, in chorus. "'Ma-nip-you-later!'" And they stood around to condole while Nyoda's side prepared supper. Then it was that Calvin, basely deserting the team he had helped so far, went over to the side of the enemy and helped Migwan fetch wood for the fire. Both sides stopped often to jeer at each other, so it took them twice as long to get the meal ready as it would have ordinarily. They loitered and sang along the way home, letting the horses take their time, and it was quite late when they reached Onoway House.

The first thing that greeted them was the sight of Mr. Bob, the cocker spaniel, rolling on the front lawn in great distress, and giving every sign of being poisoned. They hastily administered an antidote and, after a time of suspense were confident that the effect of the poison had been counteracted. So far they had only been in the kitchen, but when the excitement about the dog was over they moved toward the sitting-room to rest awhile and drink lemonade before going to bed. When the light was lit they all stopped in astonishment. In the sitting-room there was an old-fashioned combination desk and bookcase, the bookcase part set on top of the desk and reaching nearly to the ceiling. It belonged to the house, and the desk was closed and locked. Now, however, it stood open, and all the drawers were pulled out, while the top of the desk and the floor before it were strewn with papers in great disorder. 153

"Burglars!" cried Migwan. "The house has been robbed!" They immediately looked through the house to see what had been taken. Up-stairs in the room occupied by the two boys there was a desk similar to the one in the sitting-room. This had also been broken open and the drawers searched through, although the disorder of papers was not so great as it was down-stairs. Half afraid of what they should find, the whole family went from room to room, but nothing else seemed to have been disturbed, and as far as they could see nothing had been stolen. The silver in the sideboard drawer was untouched, but then, this was only plate, and worn at that. But in full view on the dining-room table lay Sahwah's Firemaker Bracelet, which she had laid there a few moments before starting for the picnic, and then, with her customary forgetfulness, neglected to pick up again. This was solid silver and worth stealing. Further than that, she had also forgotten to wear her watch, and it was still safe in her top bureau drawer. It was a riddle, and as they talked it over they could only come to one conclusion, and that was that the burglar had thought there were large sums of money hidden in the two desks and had passed over the small articles in the hope of getting a bigger harvest, or else was leaving those other things to the last. He ransacked the up-stairs desk, having broken the lock, and then went through the one down-stairs. While looking through the papers in the sitting-room he had evidently been frightened away by something, for there was one drawer that had not been disturbed. This also accounted for the fact that nothing else had been taken. What had frightened him was probably the barking of the dog, who, although he was on the outside, had become aware of the presence of someone in the house. He had fed the dog poison, probably poisoned meat, for they had found a small piece of meat on the porch. Evidently the poison had begun to act before Mr. Bob had it all eaten, and he left that piece. But before the dog was dead the burglar had heard the family returning along the road, singing, and made his escape. The whole thing must have happened not long before, for the dog had not had the poison long enough to take deadly effect. It was then that they regretted having lingered so long over the game of charades and delayed their homecoming. 154

"If we had only been half an hour sooner, we might have found out who it was," said Mrs. Gardiner.

"Thank Heaven we weren't half an hour later," said Hinpoha, "or Mr. Bob would have been dead." She would have felt worse about losing Mr. Bob than about having all her possessions

stolen.

"How about sleeping in the tepee to-night?" asked Gladys. There was not enough room in the house for so many people and the eight Winnebagos had made their beds in the tepee while the three girls from town were there, both to solve the question of sleeping quarters and for the fun of the thing. It was just like camping out to sleep on the ground, all the eight girls in a circle around the little watch fire in the middle of the tepee.

"Oh, I'll be afraid to," said Hinpoha.

"I don't know but what it would be just as safe as sleeping in the house," said Nyoda. "I doubt if anyone would think of people sleeping out in that thing. It's a rather novel idea in this neighborhood. And at any rate there's nothing out there to steal and consequently nothing to tempt a thief."

So, their fears having vanished, the Winnebagos went to bed in the tepee just as they had planned. Nyoda took the precaution of putting her pistol under her pillow. The girls really enjoyed the air of suppressed excitement. When did youth and high spirits ever fail to respond to the thrill of danger, either real or fancied? This attempted burglary was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to most of the girls and they were getting as much thrill out of it as possible. It amused them to see Tom and Calvin parading the front lawn armed with bird guns, swelled up with importance at having to guard a houseful of women. Instead of hoping that the burglar had been scared away for good they wished fervently that he would return and give them a chance to shoot. They would have stayed there all night if Mrs. Gardiner had not ordered them to bed.

One by one the girls in the tepee dropped off to slumber, worn out with the varied events of the day. But Nyoda could not sleep. She had a throbbing headache from the glare of the sun on the water while she sat fishing. The little fire, in the center of the bare circle of earth which prevented it from spreading, died down and subsided to glowing embers, then one by one these turned black and left the tepee in darkness. There was not a spark left. Nyoda was sure of this, for she sat up several times in an effort to make herself comfortable, and when she took a drink from the pail of well water which stood nearby she emptied the dipper over the spot where the fire had been, to make doubly sure. Still sleep would not come. She stared out of the doorway of the tepee into the darkness. A group of beech trees with their light grey bark loomed up ghostlike before the door. She began to think of the ghost which had appeared to her that other night in that very doorway, and tried to connect the incidents which had taken place afterwards with that. One thing was sure—someone was getting into Onoway House every few days. Why nothing was taken was a mystery to her. It seemed to her now that it was not so much an attempt at burglary as an effort to annoy and frighten the family. Possibly it was someone who had a grudge against them—she could not imagine why—and was indulging in these pranks to satisfy a spite. She thought she saw a glimmer of light on the subject.

Farmer Landsdowne had once told her that when it became known that Mr. Mitchell was going to give up the care of the place, several farmers of the Centerville Road district had applied for the position of caretaker, but wishing to assist Migwan, the Bartletts had refused their offers and given the place over to the Winnebagos. That must be it. Someone wanted that job badly and was wreaking his disappointment on the people who had kept him from getting it. The more she thought of it the more probable it seemed. Possibly more than one were involved in the plot.

Then another thought struck her. Could it be the crazy man who lived alone in the little house among the trees? Calvin had stated that he never left the house, but who could account for the inspirations of an unbalanced mind? That nothing had been taken from the house seemed to indicate a want of fixed purpose in the mind of the housebreaker—to go to all that trouble for nothing. This idea also seemed worth considering.

As she lay turning these things over in her mind she thought she heard a stealthy footstep in the grass outside of the tepee. Thinking that the ghost was coming to pay another visit, she drew the pistol from under her pillow and turning over, face downward, lay with it pointed toward the doorway. There would be no outcry when he appeared in the doorway. The first intimation the ghost would have that he was observed would be a shot in the leg that would prevent him from running away and would solve the mystery. In tense silence she waited, one; two; three minutes, but nothing appeared. Then suddenly she smelled smoke, and turning around swiftly saw that the side of the tepee toward which she had had her back was in flames.

"Fire!" she called at the top of her voice. "Sahwah! Hinpoha! Gladys! Migwan! Wake up!" And seizing the pail of water she dashed it against the side of the tepee. The water sizzled as it fell, but the canvas covering was burning like tinder. Thus rudely awakened the girls sprang up in alarm. The place was filling with dense smoke, and through it they groped their way to the opening, dragging out their blankets. Hardly had the last girl got out when the whole thing was one roaring blaze, which lit up the scenery a long way around.

Nyoda, paying no attention to the flames that were mounting skyward from the burning canvas, looked intently for a lurking figure among the trees, for she thought it hardly possible that whoever had set the tepee afire could have gotten outside of the range of light in that short time. It was possible to see as far as the road on the one side and across the river on the other. But nowhere was there a man or the shadow of a man. The folks came running out of Onoway House half dressed and in terror that the girls had not escaped from the burning tent in time, and the farmers all the way down the road, seeing the glare, rushed to offer their assistance, for a fire in the country is a serious thing where there is no water pressure. Farmer Landsdowne came on a

dead run, carrying a water bucket. Even Abner Smalley appeared in the midst of the crowd. He gave a scowling look at Calvin, but said nothing, and soon took his departure when the danger was over, as it was directly, for it did not take long to reduce that canvas covering to a black mass, and buckets of water thrown all around on the ground and the trees kept the fire from spreading.

For the second time that night the family gathered in the sitting-room and faced each other over an exciting happening. "I told you if you built a fire in that tepee you would burn it down," said Mrs. Gardiner. "I never felt easy when you had one."

"But it didn't catch fire from our little fire," declared Nyoda, and told the events of the night, from the going out of the fire to the footsteps outside the tepee when the canvas had suddenly blazed up when she was lying in wait for the ghost with a pistol. The circle of faces paled with fear as she told her tale. Who could this mysterious visitor be, who seemed determined to do them some harm? The girls finished the night in the house, three in a bed, but none of them closed their eyes to sleep.

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CHAPTER XI.—THE WELL DIGGER'S GHOST.

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The next morning Mrs. Gardiner sent Mr. Landsdowne to interview the police force of the township in which the Centerville Road belonged, and he brought the whole force back with him. He had to bring the whole force if he brought any for it embraced only one man and he was well along in years, but he had a uniform and a helmet and a club and a gun, and presented an imposing appearance as he strutted up and down the yard, before which an evil doer might be moved to pause. The three girls from town had departed and Nakwisi had left her spy glass behind in the excitement, and this was a source of great entertainment to the rural gendarme. He spent a great deal of time sliding the lens back and forth to fit his eye and peering up the road into the distance, or looking up into the air, as if he expected to see the burglar approaching in an airship. He was very talkative and fond of recounting the captures he had made single handed, and declared solemnly that the man in this case was as good as caught already, for no one had ever escaped yet when Dave Beeman had started out to get him.

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Nyoda, who was fond of seeing her theories worked out, still held to the idea that the mysterious visitor was someone who wanted the job of caretaker, and inquired closely of Farmer Landsdowne who the men were who had applied for the position. When it came down to fact there was only one who had really wanted the job very badly, although several others had mentioned the fact that they wouldn't mind doing it, and that man had found a similar situation immediately afterward and left the neighborhood. So her theory did not seem to be inclined to hold water.

She had another idea, however, and wrote to Mr. Mitchell, asking if he had ever heard strange noises in the attic while he lived there. Mr. Mitchell answered and said that not only had he heard strange noises in the attic, but also in the cellar and in the barn, and that pieces of furniture had apparently moved themselves in the middle of the night; and it was on this account that he had left the place, as it made his wife so nervous she became ill. This fact put a new face on the matter. The hostility, then, was not directed against themselves personally, but against the tenants of the house, no matter who they were. But this idea left them more in the dark than ever, and they lost a good deal of sleep over it without reaching any solution.

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After a few days of zealous watching, during which time nothing happened, the police force of Centerville township gave it up as a bad job and relaxed its vigilance, declaring that the firebug must have gotten out of the country, for that was the only way he could hope to escape his eagle eye. "If he was still in the country, I'd a' had him by this time", Dave Beeman asserted confidently. "So as long as he's gone that far you don't need to worry any more." And he took himself off, eager to get back to the quiet game of pinochle in Gus Wurlitzer's grocery store, which Farmer Landsdowne had interrupted several days ago.

It was just about this time that Migwan had her biggest order for canned tomatoes—from a fashionable private sanitarium a few miles distant, and the rush of canning gradually took their minds off the mysterious intruder. Migwan, picking her finest and ripest tomatoes to fill this order, noticed that a number of the vines were drooping and turning yellow. The half ripe tomatoes were falling to the ground and rotting. One whole end of the bed seemed to be affected. She looked carefully for insects and found none. Some of the leaves seemed worse shrivelled than others. In perplexity she called Mr. Landsdowne over to look at them. He looked closely at the plants and also seemed puzzled as to the cause of the mysterious blight. "It isn't rot," he said, "because the bed is high and dry and the plants have never stood in water." Upon looking closely he discovered that the affected plants were covered with a fine white coating. He gave a smothered exclamation. "Do you know what that is?" he asked. "It's lime! Somebody has sprayed your plants with a solution of lime. Are you sure you didn't do it yourself?" he asked, quizzically.

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Migwan shook her head. "I haven't sprayed those plants with anything for a month," she asserted, "and neither has anyone else in the house."

"Somebody outside of the house has done it, then," said Mr. Landsdowne.

The work of the mysterious visitor again! It struck dismay into the breasts of the whole household. They never knew when and where that hand was going to strike next. And so silently, so mysteriously, without ever leaving a trace behind!

There was nothing left to do but dig up the dead plants and throw them away. Migwan almost stopped breathing when she thought that the rest of the bed might be treated in the same way, and the source of her revenue cut off. But why was all this happening? What could anyone possibly have against the peaceful dwellers at Onoway House?

A guard was set over the tomato bed both day and night for a week and the big order for the sanitarium was filled as fast as the tomatoes ripened. Nothing at all happened during this time and the vigilance was relaxed. A large dog was turned loose in the garden at night and they felt secure in his protection. This dog belonged to Calvin Smalley. When he had left his uncle's house he had to leave Pointer behind, as he did not know what else to do with him, but now that the Gardiners were willing to have him he went over and got him when he knew his uncle was away from the house, so he would not have to meet him. Pointer was overjoyed at seeing his young master again and attached himself to the household at once, and never made the slightest effort to go back to his old home. He had a deep, heavy bark which could not fail to rouse the house at once. With the coming of Pointer the girls breathed easily again.

One day when Migwan had gone over to see the Landsdownes, Mr. Landsdowne had given her a treasure for her garden. This was a plant of a rare species called Titania Gloria, which a friend had brought from Bermuda. It was a first year growth and so would not bloom until the following summer. Migwan planted it along the fence beside the mint bed and treasured it like gold, for the blossom of the Titania Gloria was a wonderful shade of blue and was considered a prize by fanciers, who paid high prices for cuttings of the plant. In the excitement over the tepee and the tomato plants, however, she forgot to tell the other girls about it, so she was the only one who knew what a precious thing that little bed of leaves was.

The weather was so fine that week that Migwan decided to have a garden party and invite a number of friends from town. Gladys promised to dance and the boys cleared a circle for her in the grass under the trees, picking up every stick that lay on the ground. Mrs. Landsdowne, hearing about the party, offered to make ice cream for them in her freezer. Just before the guests arrived Migwan and Calvin went over after it. They took the raft, because they thought that would be the easiest way of transporting the heavy tub. Migwan rode on the raft and supported the tub and Calvin walked along the bank and pulled the tow line. His eagerness to help with the festivity was somewhat pathetic. Never, to his knowledge, had there been a party at the Smalley House. The way these girls planned a party out of a clear sky and carried out their plans without delay was nothing short of marvelous to him. They were always at their ease with company, while it was a fearful ordeal for him to meet strangers. He liked to be a part of such doings; but was at a loss how to act. Migwan, with her fine understanding of things beneath the surface, saw that this boy was lonesome in the crowd, not knowing how to mix in and have a glorious time on his own account, and she always saw to it that his part was mapped out for him in all their doings. Therefore she chose him to help her bring the ice cream over.

Calvin, happy at being useful, towed the raft carefully and turned his head whenever Migwan spoke, so as to give strict attention to her words. Doing this, he fell over the branch of a tree in the path and jerked the rope violently. The raft tipped up and both Migwan and the tub of ice cream went into the river. Migwan climbed out on the bank before Calvin was up from the ground. He was aghast at what he had done. He had been so eager to help with the party and now he had spoiled it! That he would be instantly expelled from Onoway House he was sure, and he felt that he deserved it. Migwan, at least, would never speak to him again. Speechless, he turned piteous eyes to where she sat on the bank dripping. To his surprise she was doubled up with laughter. "What are you laughing at?" he asked, startled.

"Because you upset the raft and the ice cream fell into the river!" giggled Migwan. Calvin gasped. The very thing that was nearly killing him with chagrin was the cause of her mirth! It was the first time he had ever seen anyone make light of a calamity. Her mirth was so contagious that he began to laugh himself. Still laughing, he brought the tub out of the river and set it on the bank. The water had washed away the packing of ice, but the lid on the inner can was providentially tight and the ice cream was unharmed. That little incident crystallized the friendship between the two. After that he was Migwan's slave. A girl who could be thrown into the river without getting vexed was a friend worth having. Dripping, they returned to the house, where the preparations for the party were at their height, to be laughed at immoderately and christened the "Water Babies."

To Hinpoha the Artistic had been entrusted the setting of the tables. Her decorations were water lilies from the river, and when she had finished it looked as if a feast had been spread for the river nymphs. Around the edges of the platter she put bunches of bright mint leaves. Her artistic efforts called out so much praise from the guests that she was in a continual state of blushing as she waited on the table.

"What's the matter with your hand?" asked Migwan, noticing that she was passing things around left handedly.

"Nothing," said Hinpoha, "nothing much. I slipped when I was getting the lilies and fell on my wrist and it feels lame, that's all."

"Is it sprained?" asked Migwan.

"Oh, no," said Hinpoha, "I don't think so."

"It's all swelled up," said Migwan, holding up the injured wrist. "Let me paint it with iodine and tie it up for you."

Hinpoha maintained that it was nothing serious, but Migwan insisted. "Where is the iodine, mother?" she asked.

"On the pantry shelf," answered Mrs. Gardiner. Migwan got the bottle and painted Hinpoha's wrist before the party could proceed. Hinpoha surveyed the brown stripe around her arm rather disgustingly. It was for this very reason that she had said nothing about the wrist before. She did not want it painted up for the party. It offended her artistic eye and she would rather suffer in silence.

While the guests were sitting at the tables Gladys danced on the lawn for their entertainment. The merry laughter was hushed in surprise and delight at her fairylike movements. In the silence which reigned at this time the thing which happened was distinctly heard by everyone. Apparently from the depths of the earth there came a muffled thud, thud, as of a pick striking against hard ground. It kept up for a few minutes and then ceased, to be renewed again after a short interval. The dwellers at Onoway House looked at each other. Into each mind there sprang the story of the Deacon's well, and the words of Farmer Landsdowne, "*Superstitious folks say you can still hear the buried well digger striking with his pick against the ground that covers him.*" It was the most mysterious sound, far away and faint, yet seemingly right under their very feet. Gladys heard it and paused in her dancing. Pointer and Mr. Bob both heard it and began to bark. In a little while the thudding noise ceased and was heard no more, and the company were all left wondering if they could have been the victims of imagination.

"Maybe it's somebody down cellar," said Calvin, and taking Pointer with him, went down. Tom followed him. But there was no sign of anyone down there. Pointer ran around with his nose to the ground as if he were smelling for footsteps, but his tail kept wagging all the while. They were all familiar footsteps he scented. Nothing was out of place in the cellar except that a basket of potatoes was thrown over and the potatoes had rolled out on the cement floor. The boys noticed this without thinking anything of it. The mystery of the well digger's ghost remained unsolved.

In the cool of the early evening after her guests had departed, Migwan wandered down into the garden to look at her various plants and flowers. It occurred to her that she had not paid her Titania Gloria a visit for several days. But what a sight met her eyes when she reached the spot where the precious thing had been planted! Not a single bit was left. The clean cut stalks showed where they had been clipped off close to the ground. Migwan started up with a cry of dismay which brought the other girls running to her side. "My Titania Gloria!" gasped Migwan. "Look! The mysterious visitor has been at work again!" And she told them about the valuable cuttings that had disappeared so uncannily.

"We never hear that ghost but what something happens after it!" said Gladys, in an awestruck tone. The girls peered apprehensively into the shadows of the tall trees surrounding the garden.

"What's up?" asked Hinpoha, joining the group. Migwan pointed to the devastated bed. "What's the matter with it?" asked Hinpoha.

"My Titania Gloria!" said Migwan. "It's been clipped off at the roots."

"Your what?" asked Hinpoha. Migwan explained about the rare plant Farmer Landsdowne had given her. Hinpoha gave a sudden start and exclamation. "What did you say it was?" she asked.

"A Titania Gloria," answered Migwan.

"Well, girls, I'm the guilty one, then," said Hinpoha, "for I cut those plants off thinking they were mint. That was what I decorated the platters with this afternoon. Do anything you like with me, Migwan, beat me, hang me to a tree, put my feet in stocks, or anything, and I'll make no resistance." She was absolutely frozen to the spot when she realized what she had done.

Migwan, grieved as she was over the loss of her cherished Titania, yet had to laugh at the depths of Hinpoha's mortification. "You old goose!" she said, putting her arms around her, "don't take it so to heart! It's my fault, not yours at all, because I didn't tell anyone what that plant was. And the leaves do look just like mint." Thus she comforted the discomfited Hinpoha.

"Migwan," said her mother, when they had returned to the house, "where did you get that iodine with which you painted Hinpoha's wrist this afternoon?"

"On the pantry shelf, just where you told me," answered Migwan.

"Well," said her mother, "I told you wrong. The iodine is up on my wash-stand."

"Then what was in the brown bottle on the pantry shelf?" asked Migwan. The bottle was produced.

"Why," said Mrs. Gardiner, "that's walnut stain, guaranteed not to wear off!"

Then there was a laugh at Migwan's expense!

"Old Migwan Hubbard
She went to the cupboard,
To get iodine in a phial,
But she couldn't read plain,
And brought walnut stain,

And now her poor patient looks vile!"

chanted Sahwah.

"You're even now," said Gladys, "you've each scored a trick."

"*"We do this to each other!"*" said Migwan and Hinpoha in the same breath, and locked fingers and made a wish according to the time-honored custom.

CHAPTER XII.—OPHELIA FINDS A FAIRY GODMOTHER.

As the summer progressed, the girls had more than one conference as to what was to become of Ophelia when they left Onoway House. To let her go back to her life in the slums was unthinkable. So far, Old Grady had made no effort to get her back, possibly for the simple reason that she did not know where the child was. They did not even know whether or not she had a legal claim on Ophelia. All Ophelia knew about the business was that Old Grady had taken her from the orphan asylum when she was seven years old. Where she had lived before she went to the orphan asylum she could not remember, so she must have been very young when she came there. They were equally unwilling that she should return to the asylum.

"If we could only find someone to adopt her," said Hinpoha. That would be the best thing, they all agreed, although there was a lingering doubt in the mind of each one as to whether anyone would want to adopt Ophelia. Grammar was to her a totally unnecessary accomplishment, and the amount of slang she knew was unending. By dint of hard labor they had succeeded in making her say "you" instead of "yer," and "to" instead of "ter," and discard some of her more violent slang phrases, but she was still obviously a child of the streets and the tenement, and that life had left its brand upon her. It showed itself constantly in her speech. They had better success in teaching her table manners, for with a child's gift of imitation she soon fell into the ways of those around her.

But having had so much excitement in her short life she still pined for it. While the life in the country was pleasant in the extreme it was far too quiet to suit her and she longed to be back in the crowded tenement where there was something happening every hour out of the twenty-four; where people woke to life instead of going to bed when darkness fell and the lamps were lighted; where street cars clanged and wagons rattled and fire engines rumbled by; where the harsh voices of newsboys rang out above the loud conversation of the women on the doorsteps and the wailing of the babies. The zigging of the grasshoppers and the swishing of the wind in the Balm of Gilead tree and the murmur of the river had for her a mournful and desolate sound, and she often covered up her ears so as not to hear it. When she first came to Onoway House she was so interested in the new life that it kept her busy all day long finding out new things; but gradually the novelty wore off. At first she had been as mischievous as a monkey; always up to some prank or other. She teased Tom and was teased by him in return; she put burrs in Mr. Bob's long ears; she climbed trees and threw things down on the heads of unsuspecting persons underneath; she startled the girls out of their wits by lying unseen under the couch in the sitting-room and grabbing their ankles unexpectedly. Always she was doing something, and always merry and full of life; so that she made the girls feel that they had done a fine thing by bringing her to Onoway House.

But of late a change had come over her. She began to droop, and to sit silent by herself at times. The girls did their best to keep her amused, but they were very busy with the continual canning, and Betty, who had more time than the others, did not like her and would not play with her. So she grew more and more homesick for the big, noisy city and the playmates of other days. Then had come the time when she was so sunburned and she had developed the fondness for Sahwah. After that she was less lonesome, for Sahwah was such a lively person to be attached to that one had always to be on the lookout for surprises. Sahwah taught her to swim and dive and ride a bicycle; she had the boys make a swing for her under the big tree, and Ophelia blossomed once more into happiness. At Sahwah's instigation she played more tricks on the other girls than before.

But Ophelia was a shrewd little person, and she knew that the summer would come to a close and the girls would not live together any more. She often heard them discussing their plans. What was to become of her then? The happy family life at Onoway House stirred in her a desire to have a home too, and a mother of her own. She began to grow wistful again and at times her eyes would have a strange far-away look. The scandals of the streets which were once the breath of life to her and which she repeated with such relish, began to lose their charm, and she developed a taste for fairy tales. "Tell me the story about the fairy godmother," she would say to Sahwah, and would listen attentively to the end. "Are you sure I've got one somewhere?" she would ask eagerly.

"You surely have," Sahwah would answer, to satisfy her.

And then, "What *are* we going to do with Ophelia when the summer is over?" Sahwah would ask the girls after Ophelia was in bed. And Hinpoha would think of Aunt Phœbe and knew she would never adopt such a child as Ophelia was; and Migwan knew that it would be out of the question in her family; and Sahwah knew that her mother would not let her come and live with them; and

Gladys thought of her delicate mother and sighed. Nyoda could not make a home for her, because she had none of her own and a boarding house was no place for a child.

"It's a shame," Sahwah would declare vehemently, "that there aren't fathers and mothers enough in this world to go round. Here's Ophelia will have to go into an institution more than likely, and grow up without any especial interest being taken in her, while we have had so much done for us. It isn't fair."

"There's something curious about Ophelia," said Gladys, musingly. "While she came from the tenements and is as wild and untrained as any little street gamin, she has the appearance of a child of a much higher class. Have you ever noticed how small and perfect her hands and feet are? And what beautiful almond shaped fingernails she has? And what delicate features? Have you seen how erectly she carries herself, and how graceful she is when she dances? In spite of her name, I don't believe she is Irish; and I don't think her people could have been low class. There's an indefinable something about her which spells quality."

"Probably a princess in disguise," said Sahwah, in a tone of amusement. "Leave it to Gladys to scent 'quality.'"

But the others had noticed the same characteristics in Ophelia and were inclined to agree with Gladys on the subject.

"But what about the strange spot of light hair on her head?" asked Sahwah. "Would you call that a mark of quality?" But to this there was no answer. They had never seen or heard of anything like it before. Thus the summer days slipped by and Onoway House continued to shelter two homeless orphans, neither of whom knew what the future held in store for them.

One afternoon when the girls had planned to go for a long walk to the woods Gladys read in the paper that a balloonist was to make an ascension over the lake. For some unaccountable reason she took a fancy that she would like to see the performance. "Oh, Gladys," said Sahwah, impatiently, "you've seen balloonists before and you'll see plenty yet; come with us this afternoon." But Gladys held out, even while she wondered to herself why she was so eager to see this not uncommon sight. Half offended at her, the other girls departed in the direction of the woods. Gladys climbed high up in the Balm of Gilead tree, from which she could look over the country for miles around and easily see the lake and the distant amusement park from which the balloonist was to ascend.

The newspaper said three o'clock, but evidently the performance was delayed, for although Gladys was on the lookout since before that time nothing seemed to be happening. To aid her in seeing she took Nakwisi's spy glass up into the tree with her, and while she was waiting for the parachute spectacle she amused herself by focusing the glass on far away objects on the land and bringing them right before her eyes, as it seemed. She could look right into the back door of a distant farm house and see children playing in the doorway and chickens walking up and down the steps; she could see the men working in the fields; she could see the yachts out on the lake and the smoky trail of a freight steamer. Somewhere in the middle of her range of vision were the gleaming rails of the car tracks. She looked at them idly; they were like long streaks of light in the sun. She saw two men, evidently tramps, come out of the bushes along the road and bend over the rails. Somewhere along that stretch of track there was a derailing switch and it seemed to Gladys that it was at this point where the men were. Gladys looked at the pair, suspiciously, for a second and then decided they were track testers. One had an iron bar in his hand and he seemed to be turning the switch. Suddenly the other man pointed up the road and then the two jumped quickly backward into the bushes. Gladys looked in the direction the man had pointed. Far off down the track she could see the red body of the "Limited" approaching at a tremendous rate. The stretch of country past the Centerville Road was flat and even; the track was perfect and there was no traffic to block the way, and the cars made great speed along here. Something told Gladys that the men had had no business at the switch; that they meant to derail and wreck the Limited. Gladys had learned to think and act quickly since she had become a Camp Fire Girl, and scarcely had the idea entered her head that the Limited was in danger, than she conceived the plan of heading it off. Before the car reached the switch it must pass the Centerville Road. Being the Limited, it did not stop there. So Gladys planned to run the automobile down the Centerville Road and flag the car. She flung herself from the tree in haste, got the machine out of the barn and started down the road with wide-open throttle.

Trees and fences whirled dizzily by, obscured in the cloud of dust she was raising. Across the stillness of the fields she could hear the Limited pounding down the track. A hundred yards from the end of the road the automobile engine snorted, choked and went dead. Without waiting to investigate the trouble, Gladys jumped out and proceeded on foot. Could she make it? She could see the red monster through the trees, rushing along to certain destruction. With an inward prayer for the speed of Antelope Boy, the Indian runner, she darted forward like an arrow from the bow. Breathless and spent she came out on the car track just a moment ahead of the thundering car, and waved the scarlet Winnebago banner, which she had snatched from the wall on the way out. With a quick jamming of the emergency brakes that shook the car from end to end it came to a standstill just beyond the Centerville Road, and only fifty feet from the switch.

"What's the matter?" asked the motorman, coming out.

"Look at the switch!" panted Gladys, sinking down beside the road, unable to say more.

The motorman looked at the switch. "My God," he said, mopping his forehead, "if we'd ever run into that thing going at such a rate there wouldn't have been anyone left to tell the tale."

The passengers were pouring from the car, eager to find out the reason for the sudden stoppage. "What's the matter?" was heard on every side.

"You've got that girl to thank," said the motorman, moving back toward his vestibule, "that you're not lying in a heap of kindling wood." Gladys, much abashed and still hardly able to breathe, laid her head on her knee and sobbed from sheer nervousness and relief.

"Gladys!" suddenly said a voice above the murmurings of the throng of passengers.

Gladys raised her head. "Papa!" she cried, staggering to her feet. "Were you on that car?"

Another figure detached itself from the crowd and hastened forward. "Mother!" cried Gladys. "Oh, if I hadn't been able to stop it—" and at the horror of the idea her strength deserted her and she slipped quietly to the ground at her parents' feet.

When she came to the car had gone on and she was lying in the grass by the roadside with her head in her mother's lap. "Cheer up, you're all right," said her mother a little unsteadily, smiling down at her. Gladys now became aware of two other figures that were standing in the road.

"Aunt Beatrice!" she cried. "And Uncle Lynn! What are you doing here?"

"We all came out to surprise you," said her father. "We got back from the West last night; sooner than we expected, and decided we would run out without any warning and see what kind of farmers you were. The automobile is being overhauled so we came on the interurban. We didn't know it didn't stop at your road."

Then, Gladys suddenly remembered her own disabled car standing in the road, and they all moved toward it. With a little tinkering it condescended to run and they were soon at Onoway House, telling the exciting tale to Mrs. Gardiner, who held up her hands in horror at the thought of the fate which the newcomers had so narrowly escaped. Aunt Beatrice, not being strong, was much agitated, and developed a palpitation of the heart, and had to lie in the hammock on the porch and be doctored, so Gladys had her hands full until the girls came back. They were much surprised at the houseful of company and very glad to see Mr. and Mrs. Evans, who were very good friends of the Winnebagos indeed. They looked with interest when Aunt Beatrice was introduced, for they all remembered the tragic story Gladys had told them about the loss of her baby in the hotel fire. Aunt Beatrice felt well enough to get up then and acknowledge the introductions with a sweet but infinitely sad smile that went straight to their hearts, and brought tears to the eyes of the soft-hearted Hinpoha.

Ophelia came in last, having loitered on the lawn to play with Pointer and Mr. Bob. She had taken off her hat and was swinging it around in her hand when she came up on the porch. "And this is the little sister of the Winnebagos," said Nyoda, drawing her forward. Aunt Beatrice looked down at the dust-streaked little face, with her sad smile, but her eyes rested there only an instant. She was gazing as if fascinated at the strange ring of light hair on her head. She became very pale and her eyes widened until they seemed to be the biggest part of her face.

"Lynn!" she gasped in a choking voice, "Lynn! Look!" and she sank on the floor unconscious. "It can't be! It can't be!" she kept saying faintly when they revived her. "Beatrice died in the fire. But Beatrice had that ring of light hair on her head! It can't be! But there never were two such birthmarks!"

What a hubbub arose when this startling possibility was uttered! Ophelia, the lost Beatrice? Could it possibly be true? Uncle Lynn lost no time in finding out. Taking Ophelia with him he hunted up Old Grady. She knew nothing more save that she had gotten her from an orphan asylum, which she named. At the asylum he learned what he wanted to know. The superintendent remembered about Ophelia on account of the strange ring of light hair. The child had been brought to the institution when she was about a year old. There was a babies' dispensary in connection with the place, and into this a weak, haggard girl of about eighteen had staggered one day carrying a baby. The baby was sick and she begged them to make it well. While she sat waiting for the nurse to look at the baby the girl collapsed. She died in a charity hospital a few days later. On her death-bed she confessed that she had run away from a large hotel with the baby which had been left in her care, intending to hide it and get money from the parents for its recovery. But she feared this would lead her into trouble and left town with the child and never troubled the parents as she had intended, and kept the baby with her until it fell sick, when she had become frightened and sought the dispensary. She apparently never knew that the hotel had burned and covered up the traces of her flight. The baby was kept at the orphan asylum and named Ophelia. Her last name had never been known. Thence Old Grady had adopted her, but her right could be taken away from her as it was clear that she was no fit person to have the child.

"It's just like a fairy tale!" said Hinpoha, when it was established beyond a doubt that the abused street waif Gladys had brought home in the goodness of her heart was her own cousin.

"Didn't I tell you you'd find your fairy godmother if you only waited long enough?" said Sahwah. And Ophelia, from the depths of her mother's arms, nodded rapturously.

"Oh, Gladys, do you have to go home, now that your mother and father are back?" asked Migwan, anxiously.

"Not unless you want to, Gladys," said Mrs. Evans. "If you would rather stay out here until school opens, you may. Father and I are going to Boston in a few days, you know."

So there was no breaking up of the group before they all went home, with the exception of Ophelia, or rather Beatrice, as we will have to call her from now on, for, of course, she was to go with her mother.

"What must it be like, anyway," said Hinpoha, "not to have any last name until you're nine years old and then be introduced to yourself? To answer to the name of Ophelia one and 'Miss Beatrice Palmer' the next? It must be rather confusing."

Little Beatrice went to Boston with her mother and father and uncle and aunt and Onoway House missed her rather sorely. Calvin Smalley also got a measure of happiness out of the restoration of the lost child, for Uncle Lynn was so beside himself with joy over the event that he was ready to bestow favors on anyone connected with Onoway House, and promised to see that Calvin got through school and college. He would give him a place to work in his office Saturdays and vacations.

For several days now there had been no sign of the mysterious visitor, and the well digger's ghost had also apparently been laid to rest. Then one morning they woke to the realization that the unseen agency had been at work again. Pinned on the front door was a piece of paper on which was scrawled,

"If you folks know what's good for you you'll get out of that house."

"We'll do no such thing!" said Migwan, with unexpected spirit "I've started out to earn money to go to college by canning tomatoes, and I'm going to stay here until they're canned; I don't care who likes it or doesn't."

"That's it, stand up for your rights," applauded Sahwah.

"But what possible motive could anyone have for wanting us to get out of the house?" asked Migwan. Of course, there was no answer to this.

"Do you suppose the house will be burned down as the tepee was?" asked Gladys, in rather a scared voice. This suggestion sent a shiver through them all.

"We must get the policeman back again to watch," said Mrs. Gardiner.

Accordingly, the redoubtable constable was brought on the scene again.

"Well, well, well," he said, fingering the mysterious note. "Thought he'd come back again now that the coast was clear, did he? You notice, though, that he didn't make no effort while I was here. You can bet your life he won't get busy again while I'm here now. You ladies just rest easy and go on with your peeling."

Scarcely had he finished speaking, when from the bowels of the earth and apparently under his very feet, there came the strange sound as of blows being struck on hard earth or stone. The expression on Dave Beeman's face was such a mixture of surprise and alarm that the girls could not keep from laughing, disturbed as they were at the return of the sounds. "By gum," said the constable, looking furtively around, "this is certainly a queer business." He had heard the story of the well digger's ghost and it was very strong in his mind just now. "Maybe it's just as well not to meddle," he said under his breath.

Off and on through the day they heard the same sounds issuing from the ground, and at dusk the weird moaning began again. The constable showed strong signs of wishing himself elsewhere. When darkness fell the noises ceased and were heard no more that night. But another sort of moaning had taken its place. This was the wind, which had been blowing strongly all day, and early in the evening increased to the proportions of a hurricane. With wise forethought Sahwah and Nyoda brought the raft and the rowboat up on land. Leaves, small twigs and thick dust filled the air. Windows rattled ominously; doors slammed with jarring crashes. Migwan, foreseeing a devastating storm, set all the girls to picking tomatoes as fast as they could, whether they were ripe or not, to save them from being dashed to the ground. They could ripen off the vines later.

At last the sandstorm drove them into the house, blinded. Then there came such a wind as none of them had ever experienced. Trees in the yard broke like matches; the Balm of Gilead roared like an ocean in a tempest. There was a constant rattle of pebbles and small objects against the window panes; then one of the windows in the dining-room was broken by a branch being hurled against it, and let in a miniature tempest. Papers blew around the room in great confusion. Migwan rolled the high topped sideboard in front of the broken pane to keep the wind out of the room. At times it seemed as if the very house must be coming down on top of their heads, and they stood with frightened faces in the front hall ready to dash out at a moment's notice. A crash sounded on the roof and they thought the time had come, but in a moment they realized that it was only the chimney falling over. The bricks went sliding and bumping down the slope of the roof and fell to the ground over the edge.

"I pity anybody who's caught in this out in the open," said Migwan. "I believe the wind is strong enough to blow a horse over. I wonder where Calvin is now." Calvin had gone to the city with Farmer Landsdowne on business and intended to remain all night.

"He's probably all right if he has reached those friends of the Landsdownes'," said Hinpoha.

"The Smalleys are out, too," said Sahwah. "I saw them drive past after dark, going toward town, just before it began to blow so terribly. Oh, listen! What do you suppose that was?" A crash in the yard told them that something had happened to the barn. Gladys was in great distress about the car, and had to be restrained forcibly from running out to see if it was all right. The wind continued the greater part of the night and nobody thought of going to bed. By morning it had spent its force.

Then they looked out on a scene of destruction. The garden was piled with branches and trunks of trees, and strewn with clothes that had been hanging on wash-lines somewhere along the road. Up against the porch lay a wicker chair which they recognized as belonging to a house some distance away. Everywhere around they could see the corn and wheat lying flat on the ground, as if trodden by some giant foot. The roof of the barn had been torn off on one side and reposed on the ground, more or less shattered. The car was uninjured except that it was covered with a thick coating of yellow dust. It was well that they had thought to pick the tomatoes, for the vines and the frames which supported them were demolished. All the telephone wires were down as far as they could see.

Calvin was not to return until night, and they felt no great anxiety about him, but often during the day a disquieting thought came to Migwan. This was about Uncle Peter, the man who lived in the cottage among the trees. Suppose something had happened to him? From Sahwah's report, the house was very old and frail. She watched the Red House closely for signs of life, but apparently the Smalleys had not returned. The doors were shut and there was no smoke coming out of the kitchen chimney.

"Nyoda," said Migwan, finally, "I'm going over and see if that old man is all right. I can't rest until I know."

"All right," said Nyoda, "I'm going with you." Sahwah was over at Mrs. Landsdowne's, but they remembered her description of the approach to the cottage, and made the detour around the field where the bull was and the marsh beyond it, coming up to the cottage from the other side. It was still standing, although the big tree beside it had been blown over and lay across the roof.

"Would you ever think," said Migwan, "that there was anyone living in there? I could pass it a dozen times and swear it was empty, if I didn't know about it."

"Well," said Nyoda, the house is still standing, "so I suppose the old man is all right."

"I wonder," said Migwan. "He may have been frightened sick, and he may have nothing to eat or drink, now that the Smalleys are kept away. We'd better have a look. He can't hurt us. If Sahwah spent the whole afternoon with him we needn't be afraid."

They tried the door, but, of course, found it locked, and were obliged to resort to the same means of entrance as Sahwah had employed. They saw the key in the other door just as Sahwah had and turned it and opened the door. The old man was sitting by the table in just the position Sahwah had described. Apparently he was neither frightened nor hurt. He looked up when he saw them in the doorway and motioned them to come in. There was nothing extraordinary in his appearance; he was simply an old man with mild blue eyes. Obeying the same impulse of adventure which had led Sahwah across the threshold, they stepped in and sat down. The room was just as Sahwah had told them. The table was littered with wheels and rods which the old man was fitting together. As they expected, he worked away without taking any notice of them.

"Did you mind the storm?" asked Nyoda.

"Storm?" said the old man. "What storm?"

"He never noticed it!" said Migwan, in an aside to Nyoda.

"What are you making?" asked Migwan, wishing to hear from his own lips the explanation he had given Sahwah.

After his customary interval he spoke. "It's a machine that reclaims wasted moments," he explained. "Every moment that isn't made good use of goes down through this little trap door, and when there are enough to make an hour they join hands and climb up on the face of the clock again."

Migwan and Nyoda exchanged glances. The ingenious imagination of the old man surpassed anything they had ever heard. They stayed awhile, amusing themselves by looking at the books and clocks in the cabinets, and then rose, intending to slip away quietly when he was absorbed in his work, as Sahwah had done. A dish of apples standing on one of the cabinets indicated that he was not without food and their minds were now at rest about his welfare. But when they moved toward the door he turned and looked at them.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

By "it" they figured that he meant the machine he was working on. "It's a very good one indeed," said Nyoda, "very interesting."

"Do you want to buy the rights?" asked the old man, taking off his hat and putting it on again.

"He thinks he's talking to some capitalist!" whispered Migwan.

"We'll talk over the plans first among ourselves and let you know our decision," said Nyoda, not knowing what to say and wishing to appear politely interested. This speech would give them an opportunity to get away. But to her surprise Uncle Peter drew a sheet of paper from among those on the table and gravely handed it to her.

"Here are the plans," he said. "Take them and look them over and let me know in a week." Then he fell to work and forgot their presence. Holding the paper in her hands Nyoda walked out of the room, followed by Migwan. They left the house as they had entered it and returned by a roundabout way to Onoway House. Nyoda put the plans of the remarkable machine away in her room, intending to keep it as a curiosity. Soon afterward they saw the Smalleys driving into the yard of the Red House.

It took the girls most of the day to clear the garden of the rubbish which had been blown into it and tie up the prostrate plants on sticks. Calvin came back at night safe and relieved the slight anxiety they had felt about him. As they sat on the porch after supper comparing notes about the storm they heard the muffled sounds which told that the well digger's ghost was at work again. It continued throughout the evening.

"I'll be a wreck if this keeps up much longer," said Migwan. A perpetual air of uneasiness had fallen on Onoway House and it was impossible to get anything accomplished. How could they settle down to work or play with that dreadful thud, thud pounding in their ears every little while? Dave Beeman had taken himself home after the storm to see what damage had been done and they were again without the protection of the law.

"Maybe it's some animal under the ground," suggested Calvin. "It certainly couldn't be a person down there." This seemed such an amazingly sensible solution of the mystery that the girls were inclined to accept it.

"I suppose imagination does help a lot," said Migwan, "and if we hadn't heard that story about the well digger we would never have thought of a man with a pickaxe. It's undoubtedly the movements of an animal we hear."

"But what animal lives underground without any air?" asked Sahwah.

"There's probably a hole somewhere, only we haven't found it," said Migwan, who seemed determined to believe the animal theory.

"But what about the note on the door and the lime on the tomatoes and the burning of the tepee?" asked Sahwah. "You can't blame that onto an animal, can you?"

"That's very true," said Migwan, "but it is likely there is no connection between the two mysteries. It's just a coincidence. I for one am going to be sensible and stop worrying about that noise in the ground." And most of them followed Migwan's example.

The next morning was such a beautiful one that they could not resist getting up early and running out of doors before breakfast. "Let's play a game of hide-and-seek," proposed Sahwah. The others agreed readily; Hinpoha was counted out and had to be "it," and the others scattered to hide themselves. One by one Hinpoha discovered and "caught" the players, or they got "in free." Calvin startled her nearly out of her wits by suddenly dropping out of a tree almost on top of her.

"Are we all in?" asked Migwan, fanning herself with her handkerchief. She was out of breath from her strenuous run for the goal.

"All but Sahwah," said Hinpoha. She started out again to look for her, turning around every little while to keep a wary eye on the goal lest Sahwah should spring out from somewhere nearby and reach it before she did. But Sahwah was evidently hidden at some distance from the goal, and Hinpoha walked in an ever increasing circle without tempting her out. The others, tired of waiting for her to be caught, joined in the search and beat the bushes and hunted through the barn and looked up in the trees. But no Sahwah did they find.

Breakfast time neared and Hinpoha called loudly, "In free, Sahwah, game's over." But Sahwah did not emerge from some cleverly concealed nook as they expected.

"Maybe she didn't hear you," said Migwan. "Let's all call." And they all called, shouting together in perfect unison as they had done on so many other occasions, making the combined voice carry a great distance. An echo answered them but that was all. The girls looked at each other blankly.

"Do you suppose she's staying hidden on purpose?" asked Calvin.

"No," said Nyoda, emphatically, "I don't. Sahwah's had enough experience with causing us worry by disappearing never to do it on purpose again. She's probably stuck somewhere and can't get out. Do you remember the time she was shut up in the statue and couldn't talk? Something of the kind has occurred again, I don't doubt. We'll simply have to search until we find and release her."

They began a systematized search and minutely examined every foot of ground. Thinking that the barn was the most likely place to get into something and not get out again, they opened every old chest there and pried into every corner, and moved every article. They went up-stairs and looked through the lofts and corners. The roof being partly off, it was as light as day, and if she had been there anywhere they would surely have seen her. But there was no sign of her. They looked under the roof of the barn that lay on the ground, thinking that she might have crawled under that and become pinned down, but she was not there.

"Could she have fallen into the river?" asked Calvin.

"It wouldn't have done her any harm if she had," said Hinpoha. "Sahwah's more at home in the water than she is on land. It wouldn't have been unlike her to jump in and swim around and duck her head under every time I came near, but then she would have heard us calling for her and come out."

They parted every bush and shrub, and looked closely at the branches of every tree, half fearing to find her hanging by the hair somewhere.

"Do you suppose she went up the Balm of Gilead tree and into the attic window?" asked Migwan. They searched through the attic, and a laborious search it was, on account of the quantities of furniture and chests to be moved. They pulled out every drawer and burst open every trunk and chest, thinking she might have crawled into one and then the lid had closed with a spring lock. It was fully noon before they were satisfied that she was not up there. 200

"Could she be in the cellar?" asked Hinpoha. Down they went, carrying lights to look into all the dark corners. But the search was vain. The girls became extremely frightened. Something told them that Sahwah's disappearance was not voluntary. They looked at each other with growing fear. What had the message on the door said?

"If you folks know what's good for you you'll get out of that house."

Was that a warning of what had happened now? Was it a friendly or a sinister warning? Migwan was almost beside herself to think that anything had happened to Sahwah while she was staying with her. The day dragged along like a nightmare. In the afternoon Calvin had an inspiration. "Why didn't I think of it before?" he almost shouted. "Here's Pointer; he's a hunting dog and can follow a trail. We'll set him to find Sahwah's trail."

"That's right," said Migwan, in relief, "we'll surely find her now."

They gave Pointer a shoe of Sahwah's and in a moment he had started off with his nose to the ground. But if they had expected him to lead them to her hiding-place they were disappointed, for all he did was follow the trail around the garden between the house and the river. Once he went down cellar, straining hard at the chain which held him, and they were sure he would find something they had overlooked in their search, but the trail ended in front of the fruit cellar. 201

"Sahwah came down here early this morning to bring up those melons, don't you remember?" said Migwan. "That's all Pointer has found out." They kept Pointer at it for some time, but he never offered to leave the garden.

"Are you sure he's on the trail?" asked Hinpoha, doubtfully.

"Yes," said Calvin, "he never whines that way unless he is. That long howl is the hunting dog's signal that he's on the job. When he loses the trail he runs back and forth uncertainly."

"According to that, Sahwah must be very near," said Gladys. "Are you sure there isn't any other place in the house, cellar or barn that she could have gotten into, Migwan?"

"Quite sure," said Migwan, disheartened. "You know yourself the way we fincombed every foot of space."

"There's another thing that might have made Pointer lose the trail," said Nyoda. "Do you remember that he stopped short at the river once? Well, it is my belief that Sahwah ran down to the river and either fell or jumped in and swam away. That would destroy the trail, and Sahwah might be miles away for all we know." She carefully refrained from suggesting that anything had happened to Sahwah and she might have gone under the water and not come up again, but there was a fear tugging at her heart that Sahwah had dived in and struck her head on something and gone down. 202

But several of the others must have had much the same thought, for Gladys remarked, without any apparent connection, "*You can see the bottom almost all the way down the river.*"

And Hinpoha said, "*Those tangled roots of trees in the river are nasty things to get into.*"

And Calvin set the dog free immediately and untied the rowboat. He and Nyoda rowed down the river while the rest followed along the banks. The stream was clear most of the distance and they could see to the bottom. Here and there were sharp rocks jutting up and casting shadows on the sunlit bottom, and in places the water had washed the dirt away from the roots of trees so that they extended out into the river like many-fingered creatures waiting to seize their prey. But nowhere did they see what they feared. In the lower part of the river, toward the mouth, the water was deeper and had been dredged free of all obstructions, so while it was muddy and they could not see into its depths they knew that nothing was to be found here. 203

Vaguely relieved and yet dreadfully anxious and mystified they returned to Onoway House. "Do you suppose she was carried away by an automobile or wagon?" asked Migwan. "Does anyone recall seeing anything of the kind going by when we started to play?" Nobody did. While they were discussing this new theory, Pointer, who had been left to run loose while they were searching the river, came running up to them. With much wagging of his tail he went to Calvin and laid something at his feet. For a moment they could not make out what it was. Migwan recognized it first.

It was Sahwah's shoe, completely covered and dripping with black mud.

"Where did you find it, Pointer?" asked Calvin. Pointer wagged his tail in evident satisfaction, but, of course, he could not answer his master's question.

"Is that the shoe Sahwah had on this morning?" asked Nyoda.

"Yes," said Hinpoha. "I remember asking her why she wore those shoes with the red buttons to run around in and she said they were getting tight and she wanted to wear them out."

"Where does that black mud come from around here?" asked Gladys.

It was Nyoda who guessed the dreadful fact first. All of a sudden she remembered cleaning her shoes after she had come home from her visit to Uncle Peter.

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"*The marsh!*" she gasped. "*Sahwah's caught in the marsh!* It's the same mud. I went to the edge of the marsh the other day to see it and got some on my shoe."

Without stopping to hear more, Calvin dashed off in the direction of his father's farm, with Pointer at his heels and Gladys and Nyoda and Hinpoha and Migwan and Tom and Betty trailing after him as fast as they could go. Mrs. Gardiner followed a little distance behind. She could not keep up with them. Calvin tore a flat board from one of the fences as he ran along and called on the others to do the same thing. A little farther on he found a rope and took that along. They reached the edge of the marsh and looked eagerly for the figure of Sahwah imprisoned in the treacherous ooze. But the green surface smiled up innocently at them. Not a sign of a struggle, no indentation in the level, no break. To the unknowing it looked like the smoothest lawn lying like a sheet of emerald in the sun. But on second glance you saw the water bubbling up through the grass and then you knew the secret of the greenness. Nowhere could they see Sahwah.

Migwan had to force herself to ask the question that was in everybody's mind. "Has she gone under?"

"No," said Calvin, positively. "It can't be possible in so short a time. They say that a horse went down here once long ago, and it took him more than two days to be covered entirely."

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After being wrought up to such a pitch of expectancy it was a shock to find that Sahwah was not in the marsh. *But how had her shoe come to be covered with marsh mud, and what was it doing off her foot?* Where had Pointer found it?

"Oh, if only dogs could speak!" said Hinpoha. "Pointer, Pointer, where did you find it?" But Pointer could only wag his tail and bark.

From where they stood at the edge of the marsh they could see the cottage among the trees. A look of inquiry passed between Nyoda and Migwan. Calvin saw the look and understood it.

"Would you like to look in Uncle Peter's house?" he asked. His face was very pale, and Nyoda, watching him keenly, thought she detected a sudden suspicion and fear in his eyes. He looked apprehensively over his shoulder at the Red House as they started to skirt the bog. Nyoda understood that movement. Abner Smalley did not know that they knew about Uncle Peter, and Calvin had said he would be very angry if he found it out. Now he would be sure to see them going toward the house. But this thought did not make Nyoda waver in her determination to search the cottage. The urgency of the occasion released them from their promise of secrecy. As Calvin had no key they were obliged to enter by the window as on former occasions. But the front room was absolutely blank and bare and they saw the impossibility of anyone's being hidden there. It was a tense moment when they opened the door of the inner room and the girls who had never been there stepped behind the others and held their breath. Uncle Peter sat at the table just as Nyoda and Migwan had seen him a day or two before, playing with his rods and wheels. His mild blue eyes rested in astonishment on the number of people who thronged the doorway.

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"Come in, ladies," he said, politely. The room was exactly as it had been the other day and apparently he had not stirred from his position. They all felt that Sahwah had not been there and that the old man knew nothing about the matter. But Calvin spoke to him.

"Uncle Peter," he said. The man turned at the name and stared at him but gave no sign of recognizing him. "Do you know me, Uncle Peter?" said Calvin. "It's Calvin, Jim's boy."

The old man smiled vacantly and held out the bit of machinery he was working on. "It's a machine for saving time," he said. "As the minutes are ticked off—" There was nothing to be gotten out of him, and they withdrew again. Calvin looked around him fearfully as they returned through the fields, to see if his uncle had watched him take the girls to the cottage, but there was no sign of him anywhere, at which he breathed an unconscious sigh of relief. Tired out with their ceaseless searching and sick with anxiety, they returned to Onoway House.

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If we were writing an ingeniously intricate detective story the thing to do would be to wait until Sahwah was discovered by some brilliant piece of detective work and then have her tell her story, leaving the explanation of the mystery until the last chapter, and keeping the reader on the verge of nervous prostration to the end of the piece. But, as this is only a faithful narrative of actual events, and as Sahwah is our heroine as much as any of the girls, we know that the reader would much prefer to follow her adventures with their own eyes, rather than hear about them later when she tells the story to the wondering household. And we also think it only fair to say that if Sahwah's return had depended on any brilliant detective work on the part of the others we have very grave doubts as to its ever being accomplished. We will, then, leave the dwellers at Onoway House to their searching and theorizing and bewailing, and follow Sahwah from the time they started to play hide-and-seek and Hinpoha blinded her eyes and began to count "five, ten, fifteen, twenty."

Sahwah ran across the garden toward the house, intending to swing herself into one of the open cellar windows. Near this window was a flower bed which Migwan had filled with especially rich black soil. That morning she had watered the bed and had done it so thoroughly that the ground was turned into a very soft mud. Sahwah, not looking where she was going, stepped into this mud and sank in over her shoe top with one foot. When she had entered the window she stood on the cellar floor and regarded the muddy shoe disgustedly. Feeling that it was wet through, she ripped it off and flung it out of the window. It landed back in the muddy bed and was hidden by the

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growing plants. Sahwah then proceeded to hide herself in the fruit cellar. This was a partitioned off place in a dark corner. She sat among the cupboards and baskets and watched Hinpoha pass the window several times as she hunted for the players. Once Hinpoha peered searchingly into the window and Sahwah thought she was on the verge of being discovered and pressed back in her corner. There was a basket of potatoes in the way of her getting quite into the corner and she moved this out. There was also a barrel of vinegar and she slipped in behind this. As she moved the barrel it dropped back upon her shoeless foot and it was all she could do to repress a cry of pain as she stood and held the battered member in her hand. But the pain became so bad she decided to give up the game and get something to relieve it. She pushed hard against the barrel to move it out, but this time it would not move. She pushed harder, bracing her back against the wooden wall behind her, when, without warning, the wall caved in as if by magic, and she fell backwards head over heels into inky darkness. The wall through which she had fallen closed with a bang.

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Sahwah sat up and reached mechanically for the hurt foot. The pain had increased alarmingly and for a time shut out all other sensations. Then it abated a little and Sahwah had time to wonder what she had fallen into. She was sitting on a stone floor, she could make that out. It must be a room of some kind, she decided, but the darkness was so intense that she could make nothing out. "There must have been another part to the cellar behind the fruit cellar, although we never knew it," thought Sahwah, "and the back of the fruit cellar was the door." As soon as she could stand upon her foot again she moved forward in the direction from which she thought she had come and searched with her hands for a doorknob. But her fingers encountered only a smooth wall surface and after about five minutes of careful feeling she came to the startled conclusion that there was no such thing. "I must have got turned around when I tumbled," she thought, "and am feeling of the wrong wall." She accordingly moved forward until her outstretched hands encountered another hard surface and she repeated the process of looking for a doorknob. No more success here. "Well, there are four walls to every room," thought Sahwah, "and I've still got two more trys." Again she moved out cautiously and with ever increasing nervousness admitted that there was no door in that direction. "Now for the fourth side, the right one at last," she said to herself. "One, two, three, out goes me!" She moved quickly in the fourth and last direction. Without warning she ran hard into something which tripped her up. She felt her head striking violently against something hard and then she knew no more.

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She woke to a dream consciousness first. She dreamed she was lying in the soft sand on the lake shore near one of the great stone piers, where a number of men were at work. They were pounding the stones with great hammers and the vibrations from the blows shook the beach and went through her as she lay on the sand. Gradually the sparkling water faded from her sight; the sky grew dark and night fell, but still the blows continued to sound on the stone. Just where the dream ended and reality began she never knew, but, with a rush of consciousness she knew that she was awake and alive; that everything was dark and that she was lying on her face in something soft that was like sand and yet not like it. And the pounding she had heard in her dream was still going on. Thud, thud, it shook the earth and jarred her so her teeth were on edge. For a long time she lay and listened without wondering much what it was. Her head ached with such intensity that it might have been the throbbing of her temples that was shaking the earth so. After a while that dulled, but the jarring blows still kept up. With a cessation of the pain came the power to think and Sahwah remembered the strange noises they had heard issuing from the ground. It must be the same noise; only it was a hundred times louder now. It was a sort of clanging thump; like the sound of steel on stone. Even with all that noise going on Sahwah slipped off into half consciousness at times. Although there did not seem to be any doors or windows, she was not suffering for lack of air, but at the time she was too dazed to notice this and wonder at it.

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She woke with a start from one of these dozes to the realization that there was a broad streak of light on the floor. Fully conscious now, she raised her head and looked around. She was lying in a bin filled with sawdust. When she held up her head her eyes came just to the top of it. By the light she could see that she was indeed in a sort of sub-cellar. It must have been older than the other cellar for the floor was made of great slabs of mouldy stone. Her eyes followed the beam of light and she saw that a door had been opened into still another cellar beyond. In this chamber a lantern stood on the floor, whence came the light, and its ray produced weird and fantastic moving shadows. These shadows came from a man who was wielding a pickaxe against a spot in the stone wall. It was this that was causing the jarring blows. Startled almost out of her senses at seeing a man thus apparently caged up in the sub-cellar of Onoway House, Sahwah could only lay back with a gasp. She could not raise her voice to cry out had she been so inclined.

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But fast on the heels of that shock came another. The worker paused in his exertions to wipe the perspiration from his brow, and stood where the light of the lantern shone full in his face. Sahwah's heart gave a great leap when she recognized Abner Smalley. Abner Smalley in the hidden sub-cellar of Onoway House, digging a hole in the wall! Sahwah forgot her own plight in curiosity as to what he was doing. She lay and watched him fascinated while he resumed his pounding. So he was the mysterious intruder who had wrought such terror among them! This, then, was the well digger's ghost! What could he be searching for in the cellar of his neighbor's house? Sahwah dug her feet into the soft sawdust as she watched the pick rise and fall. She had no idea of the flight of time. She thought it was only a few minutes since she had fallen into the sub-cellar. She lay thinking of the expressions on the faces of the girls when she would tell them her discovery. To think that she had been the one to solve the mystery! She felt a little disappointed that the mysterious intruder should have turned out to be someone they knew. It would have been more in keeping with her idea of romance to have found a prince shut up in the

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cellar.

While she was thinking these thoughts the light suddenly vanished and she heard the bang of a door shutting. She was in darkness once more. In a moment she heard footsteps retreating and dying away in the distance. All was silent again. It took her some moments to collect her thoughts sufficiently to realize a new and significant fact. *Abner Smalley had not gone out by the door into the fruit cellar. There must be, then, another way of egress from the sub-cellar.* Instantly Sahwah made up her mind to follow him and see how he had gotten out at the other end. Her feet were imbedded deeply in the sawdust and she became aware of the fact that her shoeless foot was resting against something with a sharp edge. She drew it away and then carefully felt with her hands for the object. She could not see it when she had it but it felt like a metal box of some kind, possibly tin. She carried it with her and moved toward the place where she now knew there was a door. She found the handle easily and opened it. This was the side of the wall toward which she had moved when she had run into the bin before, and so she did not discover it. A strong breath of air struck her as she advanced into this chamber. It was scarcely more than a passage, for by reaching out her arms she could touch the wall on both sides. She moved cautiously, fearing to fall again in the dark. She felt the place in the wall where Abner Smalley had made an indentation with his pick. She was wondering where this passage led and wishing it would come to an end soon, when she struck the already sore foot against what must have been the pickaxe set against the wall and fell on her nose once more. The tin box she carried was rammed into the pit of her stomach and knocked the breath out of her, but this time she had not hit her head.

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She lay still for a moment trying to get her breath back. Her eyes were becoming accustomed to the inky darkness by this time. She looked down and saw a stone floor beneath her. She turned her head to one side and saw a stone wall beside her. She turned over altogether and looked up—and saw the constellation Cassiopea flashing down at her from the sky. For a moment she could not believe her senses. Of all the strange sights she had seen nothing had affected her so powerfully as the sight of that familiar group of stars. What she had expected to see she could not tell, stone perhaps, but anything except the open sky. She sat up in a hurry and began to investigate where she was. The wall around her seemed to be circular and all of a sudden Sahwah had the answer. She was in the cistern—the old unused cistern which was not a great distance from the house. This, then, was the opening of the sub-cellar, the way in which Mr. Smalley had made his escape. There was usually a covering over the cistern, but he had evidently been in a hurry and left it off.

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The fact that there were stars out took Sahwah's breath away. It was night then; had she been in that cellar all day? It was inconceivable, yet it was undoubtedly true. By the faint glimmer of the stars she could make out that there were hollows in the stone side of the cistern by which a person could easily climb out. She lost no time in climbing when she made this discovery. What a joy it was to be coming up into God's outdoors again! As she emerged from the cistern she saw Migwan standing in the garden beside the back porch. The moon shone full on her as she stepped out of the hole in the ground and just then Migwan caught sight of her. The apparition was too much for Migwan and she screamed one terrified scream after another until the girls came running from all over to see what fresh calamity had happened. Only seeing Sahwah standing in their midst and not having seen her appear magically out of the depths of the ground, they could not understand Migwan's terror.

"Stop screaming, Migwan," said Sahwah, and when Migwan heard her voice and saw that it was really she, she quieted down and listened while Sahwah told her tale of adventure since going down into the cellar to hide. The day had passed so quickly for Sahwah, she having lain unconscious until late in the afternoon, that she, of course, knew nothing of their frantic search for her and so could not comprehend why they made such a fuss over her return. They laughed and cried all at once and hugged her until she finally protested.

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"What have you brought along as a souvenir of your trip?" asked Nyoda, who had regained her light-hearted manner now that Sahwah was safely back.

Sahwah looked down at the box she held in her hand. "I found it in the bin of sawdust," she said. "It was just like playing 'Fish-pond' at the children's parties. You put your hand in a box of sawdust and draw out a handsome prize." And Sahwah laughed, her familiar long drawn-out giggle, that they had despaired of ever hearing again. She laid the box on the table. It was of tin, about nine inches long by three inches wide by three high, with a closely fitting cover. "Shall I open it, Nyoda?" she asked.

"I don't see any harm in doing so," said Nyoda. Sahwah took off the cover. There was nothing in the box but a folded piece of paper. She took it and spread it before them on the table.

"What is it?" they all cried, crowding around. The first thing that caught their eye was a slanting line drawn across the paper in heavy ink. There was some writing beside it, but this was so faded that it took some studying to make it out. Finally they got it. It read:

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"Supposed extension of gas vein." The upper end of the line was marked *"36 feet west of cistern."* There was a cross at that point also, and this was marked, *"Place where gas was struck at 300 feet."*

"The Deacon's gas well!" they all exclaimed in chorus. It was true, then.

"And there was a well digger's ghost, even if it didn't turn out to be the one we expected!" said Migwan.

That day was never to be forgotten, although the next cleared up the mystery and brought still

another surprise. Dave Beeman, the constable, was once more brought out and this time furnished with information that nearly caused his eyes to start from his head. Abner Smalley, the (as everyone supposed) respectable citizen of Centerville Road, breaking into his neighbor's house and deliberately trying to dig a hole in the stone wall. It was the sensation of his career. "Well, I'll be jiggered!" he gasped.

But his surprise was nothing compared to Abner Smalley's when he was confronted with the accusation without warning. He turned so pale and trembled so much that it was useless to deny his guilt.

"You are guilty, Abner Smalley," said the constable, in such a solemn tone that the girls could hardly keep straight faces. "You'd better make a clean breast of it and tell what you were doing in that house or it might go hard with you."

Abner Smalley, although he was a bully by nature, was a coward when the odds were against him, and he had always had a wholesome fear of the law, so at Dave Beeman's suggestion he decided to "make a clean breast of it." We will not weary the reader with all the conversation that took place, but will simply tell the facts of the story.

Some time ago, while the old caretaker lived on the place yet, the story of the Deacon's gas well had come to Abner Smalley's ears. He heard a fact connected with it, however, that was not generally known, namely, that the Deacon had made a record of the place where the gas was found. Believing that the Deacon had left it hidden somewhere in the house, he had devised a means of breaking in and searching for it. His first plan had been to frighten the dwellers in the house and make them believe there was a ghost in the attic so they would give the place a wide berth at night and leave him free to ransack the Deacon's old furniture. He frightened the Mitchells so that they moved. But no sooner had the Mitchells departed than the new caretakers had come; and they were a much bigger houseful than the others.

He had tried the same plan with them as he had with the others, namely, mysterious noises around the place at night. But what had frightened Mrs. Mitchell into moving had no effect on these new farmers. They shot off a gun when he was doing his best ghost stunt, namely, blowing into a bottle, which had produced that weird moaning sound. He it was who had dressed up as a ghost and appeared to Nyoda in the tepee; throwing the red pepper into her face when she made as if to attack him with a pole. It was he whom they had seen coming out of the barn that night, and later it was he again whom Migwan had seen during the hail storm. He had disappeared so utterly by jumping down the cistern. That was the first time he had been down, and on this occasion he had discovered the passage leading to the sub-cellar. It was he the girls had heard in the attic on numerous occasions. He had entered and gone out after dark by means of the Balm of Gilead tree. One time he broke the window. He had been down cellar that night when Sahwah nearly caught him. He was looking for the other entrance to the sub-cellar, which he never found. He knocked over the basket of potatoes which had mystified them so. He had been on the point of entering the house that day when Sahwah suddenly returned from town after he thought the whole family was gone for the day. When he saw her go off along the river he went in anyway and was nearly caught in the attic by the girls. He had escaped detection by hiding in a large chest.

The day they had gone for the picnic he saw them go and spent all day looking through the desks in the house. Finally the dog barked so he gave him the poisoned meat he had brought along to use if necessary. Then the family had returned and he had had a narrow escape into the cistern. He had stayed there until night, when he had set fire to the tepee, not knowing that anyone was sleeping in it. After starting the blaze he had again sought refuge in the cistern and when the crowd had gathered, came out in their midst so that his absence from such an exciting event in the neighborhood would cause no comment among the farmers. The cistern was in the shadow and everyone was watching the fire so intently that he was able to emerge unseen.

He had sprayed the tomatoes with lime and written the note which they found on the door. He had left the chisel in the automobile on one occasion when he had been hunting through the things in the barn; forgetting to take it with him when he went out.

He wanted to get hold of that record secretly and be sure whether the great vein of gas which the Deacon knew existed was on the property now owned by the Bartletts or that of the Landsdownes, and then he was going to buy that property before the owners knew about the gas, as the land would be worth a fortune if that fact ever became known. He was pretty sure, after discovering that sub-cellar, that the Deacon had left his papers down there when he went to California. By pounding on the walls he had discovered one place which he was sure was hollow. If the stone that covered the place could be removed by any trick he failed to discover it and had to resort to digging it out with a pick. This, as we already know, produced the dull thudding sound underground which had frightened the household almost out of their wits. The reason he could prowl around in the yard at night after they had set the dog to watch was that Pointer knew him and made no disturbance upon seeing him.

Abner Smalley was marched off triumphantly by Dave Beeman, and was held on such a complicated charge of house-breaking, arson, assault and battery, and intimidating peaceful citizens, that it took the combined efforts of the village to draw it up. Thus ended the great mystery which had kept Onoway House in more or less of an uproar all summer.

"I never saw anything like the way we Winnebagos have of falling into things," said Sahwah. "Here Mr. Smalley made such elaborate efforts to find that record, using up more energy and ingenuity than it would take to dig up the whole farm and hunt for the gas well; and he didn't find it in the end; and all I did was drop in on top of it without even suspecting its existence."

"There must be a special destiny that guides us," said Migwan. "Perhaps we possess an enchanted goblet, like the 'Luck of Edenhall,' only it's 'The Luck of the Winnebagos.'"

"Cheer for the 'Luck of the Winnebagos,'" said Sahwah, who never lost an occasion to raise a cheer on any pretext. And at that Sahwah never dreamed of the extent of the good fortune she had brought the Bartletts by her lucky tumble. The vein of gas which was struck when they subsequently drilled proved a sensation even in that notable gas region and made millionaires of its owners. And the reward which Sahwah received for finding the record, and that which the others received "just for living," as Migwan expressed it—for though they had not found the subcellar themselves it was due to their game that Sahwah had found it—drove the memory of their fright from their heads. But we are getting a little ahead of our story. There is one more chapter yet to the Luck of the Winnebagos before that remarkable summer came to an end.

After the departure of Abner Smalley things grew so quiet at Onoway House that Migwan, who had declared before that she would be a wreck if the excitement did not cease soon, was now complaining that things seemed flat and she wished the mystery hadn't been cleared up because it robbed them of their chief topic of conversation.

"Well, I'm going to take advantage of the quiet atmosphere and straighten out my bureau drawers," said Nyoda. "I haven't been able to put my mind to it with all this excitement going on. And they're a sight since you girls went rummaging for things for the Thieves' Market." In doing this she came upon that strange creation of Uncle Peter's brain, the plan for the "Wasted Minute Saving Machine." She showed it to the girls and they examined it wonderingly.

"What is this on the other side?" asked Migwan. "It's a will!" she cried, reading it through. "It says, 'I, Adam Smalley, give and bequeathe my farm on the Centerville Road to my son Jim, as Abner has already had his share in cash.'"

"Let me see!" cried Calvin. "It's the latest one!" he shouted, reading the date. "It's dated 1902 and the one Uncle Abner found was 1900. The farm is mine after all! Uncle Peter had this will in his possession and didn't know it! How can I thank you girls for what you've done for me?"

"It was all Migwan's fault," said Hinpoha. "She insisted upon going to see whether the old man was all right after the storm."

Migwan declared that she had had nothing to do with it; it was the Luck of the Winnebagos that had given her the inspiration. But Calvin knew well that in this case the Luck of the Winnebagos was only Migwan's own thoughtfulness.

CHAPTER XIV.—GOOD-BYE TO ONOWAY HOUSE.

By the first of September Migwan had made enough money from the sale of canned tomatoes to more than pay her way through college the first year. "It's Mother Nature who has been my fairy godmother," she said to the girls. "I asked her for the money to go to college and she put her hand deep into her earth pocket and brought it out for me. It's like the magic gardens in the fairy tales where the money grew on the bushes."

"What a summer this has been, to be sure," said Hinpoha, who was in a reflective mood. They were all sitting in the orchard, busy with various sorts of handwork. The day was hot and drowsy and the shade of the trees most inviting. "Migwan and I thought we would have such a quiet time together, just we two. She was going to write a book and I was going to illustrate it, when we weren't working in the garden. And how differently it all turned out! One by one you other girls came—I'll never forget how funny Gladys and Nyoda looked when they came out that night, and how surprised Sahwah was to find you here when she arrived. Then Gladys brought Ophelia, I mean Beatrice, and after that we never had a quiet moment. Then the mystery began and kept up all summer. Instead of these three months being a quiet rest they've been the most thrilling time of my life."

"It seems to have agreed with you, though," said Sahwah, mischievously, whereupon there was a general laugh, for Hinpoha, instead of growing thin with all the worry and excitement, had actually gained five pounds.

"As much worry as it caused me," said Migwan, "I'm glad everything happened as it did. The summer I had looked forward to would have been horribly dull and uninteresting, but now I feel that I've had some real experiences. I've got enough ideas for stories to last for years to come."

"And for moving picture plays," said Hinpoha. "But," she added, "if you go in for that sort of thing seriously, where am I coming in? You know we made a compact; I was to illustrate everything you wrote, and how am I going to illustrate moving picture plays?"

There was a ripple of amusement at her perplexity. "You'll have to illustrate them by acting them out," said Gladys. They all agreed Hinpoha would make a hit as a motion picture actress, all but Sahwah, who dropped her eyes to her lap when Migwan began to talk about moving pictures, and presently went into the house to fetch something she needed for her work. When she came out again the subject had been changed and was no longer embarrassing to her.

"What will the Bartletts say when they hear the peach crop was ruined by the wind storm?" asked

Hinpoha.

"That's the only thing about our summer experience that I really regret," answered Migwan. "I wrote and told them about it, of course, when I told them about the gas well, and Mrs. Bartlett said we shouldn't worry about it and that we ourselves were a crop of peaches."

"The dear thing!" said Gladys. "I should love to see the Bartletts again some time; they were so friendly to us last summer, and it is all due to them that we have had such a glorious time this summer."

Scarcely had she spoken when an automobile entered the drive and stopped beside the house. Migwan ran out to see who it was. The next moment she had her arms around the neck of a pretty little woman. "Oh, Mrs. Bartlett!" she cried. "Did the fairies bring you? We just made a wish to see you."

Soon the girls were all flocking around the car, shaking hands with Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett, and making a fuss over little Raymond. How the Bartletts did sit up in astonishment when all the events of the summer were told in detail! "Well, you certainly are trumps for sticking it out," said Mr. Bartlett, admiringly. "Nobody but a bunch of Camp Fire Girls would have done it." At which the Winnebagos glowed with pride.

Now that the Bartletts had come to stay at Onoway House, Migwan decided she would go home a week earlier than she had planned, as there was not enough room for so many people there. Aunt Phœbe and the Doctor were in town again, so Hinpoha could go home if she wished; and Sahwah's mother had also returned. They were a little sorry to break up so abruptly when they had planned quite a few things for that last week to celebrate the finishing of the canning, but all agreed that under the circumstances it was the best thing they could do.

"I really need a week at home," said Migwan with a twinkle in her eye, "to rest up from my vacation. There I'll get the peace and quiet that I came here to seek." Take care, O Migwan, how you talk! Once before you predicted peace and quiet, and see what happened!

Before they went, however, they must have one more big time altogether, Mrs. Bartlett insisted, and she went into town on purpose to bring out Nakwisi and Chapa and Medmangi. Close behind them came another car which also stopped at Onoway House, and out of it stepped Mr. and Mrs. Evans and Aunt Beatrice and Uncle Lynn and little Beatrice, the latter dressed up in wonderful new clothes and already subtly changed, but still eager to romp with the girls and tag after Sahwah.

"See here," said Mr. Evans, when they were all talking about going home the next day, "you girls have been working pretty hard this summer, and haven't had a real vacation yet, why don't you go for an automobile trip the last week? Gladys has her car; that is, if it came through all the excitement alive, and mother and I would be willing to let you take the other one. Go on a run of say a thousand miles or so, and see a few cities. The change will do you good."

"Oh, papa!" cried Gladys, clapping her hands in rapture. "That will be wonderful!" And the other girls fell in love with the idea on the spot.

As this was to be their last night at Onoway House nothing was left undone that would make the occasion a happy one. The evening was fine and warm and the stars hung in the sky like great jeweled lamps. With one accord they all sought the garden and the orchard, where Gladys danced on the grass in the moonlight like a real fairy. Then all the girls danced together, until Mrs. Evans declared that they looked like the dancing nymphs in the Corot picture. And Beatrice, who had been taught those same things during the summer, broke away from her mother and joined in the dance, as light and graceful as Gladys herself. It was plain to see that she had the gift which ran in the family, and as her mother watched her with a thrill of pride her heart overflowed anew in thankfulness to the girls who had restored her daughter to her.

"On such a night," quoted Migwan, looking up at the moon, "Leander swam the Hellespont——"

"The river!" cried Sahwah, immediately, "we must go out on the river once more. Oh, how can I say good-bye to the Tortoise-Crab?" And she shed imaginary tears into her handkerchief.

"Let's go for one more float," cried all the girls.

The grown-ups strolled down to the river bank and sat on the grassy slope, watching with indulgent interest what the girls were going to do next. They saw them coming far up the river and heard their song as it was wafted down on the scented breeze. Slowly and majestically the raft approached, with Sahwah standing up and guiding it with the pole. When it had come nearer the onlookers saw a romantic spectacle indeed. Gladys reposed on a bed of flowers and leaves, under a canopy of branches and vines, a ravishingly lovely Cleopatra. Beside her knelt Antony, otherwise Migwan, holding out to her a big white water lily. The other Winnebagos, as slave maidens, sat on the raft and wove flower wreaths or fanned their lovely mistress with leaf fans. It was the slaves who were doing the singing and their clear voices rang out with wonderful harmony on the enchanted air. On they came, past the spot where Sahwah had been hidden on the afternoon of the moving pictures; past the Lorelei Rock, where they had held that other pageant which had frightened Calvin so; past the spot where they lay concealed and watched the strange manoeuvres of the supposed Venoti gang. Each rock and tree along the stream was pregnant with memories of that eventful summer, and they could hardly believe that they were saying good-bye to it all.

Now they were opposite the watchers on the bank and the murmurs of admiration reached their

ears as they floated past. "What lovely voices——"

"What wonderful imaginations those girls have——"

"How beautifully they work together——"

Calvin looked on in speechless admiration, his eyes for the most part on Migwan. Never in his life had he regretted anything so much as he did the fact that these jolly friends of his were going away. He was to stay on his farm after all and now the prospect suddenly seemed empty.

The voices of the onlookers blended in the ears of the boaters with the murmur of the river as it flowed over the stones, and with the sighing of the wind in the willows as the raft passed on.

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And here let us leave the Winnebagos for a time as we love best to see them, all together on the water, their voices raised in the wonder song of youth as they float down the river under the spell of the magic moonlight.

THE END.

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