The Project Gutenberg eBook of Helen in the Editor's Chair, by Ruthe S. Wheeler

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Helen in the Editor's Chair

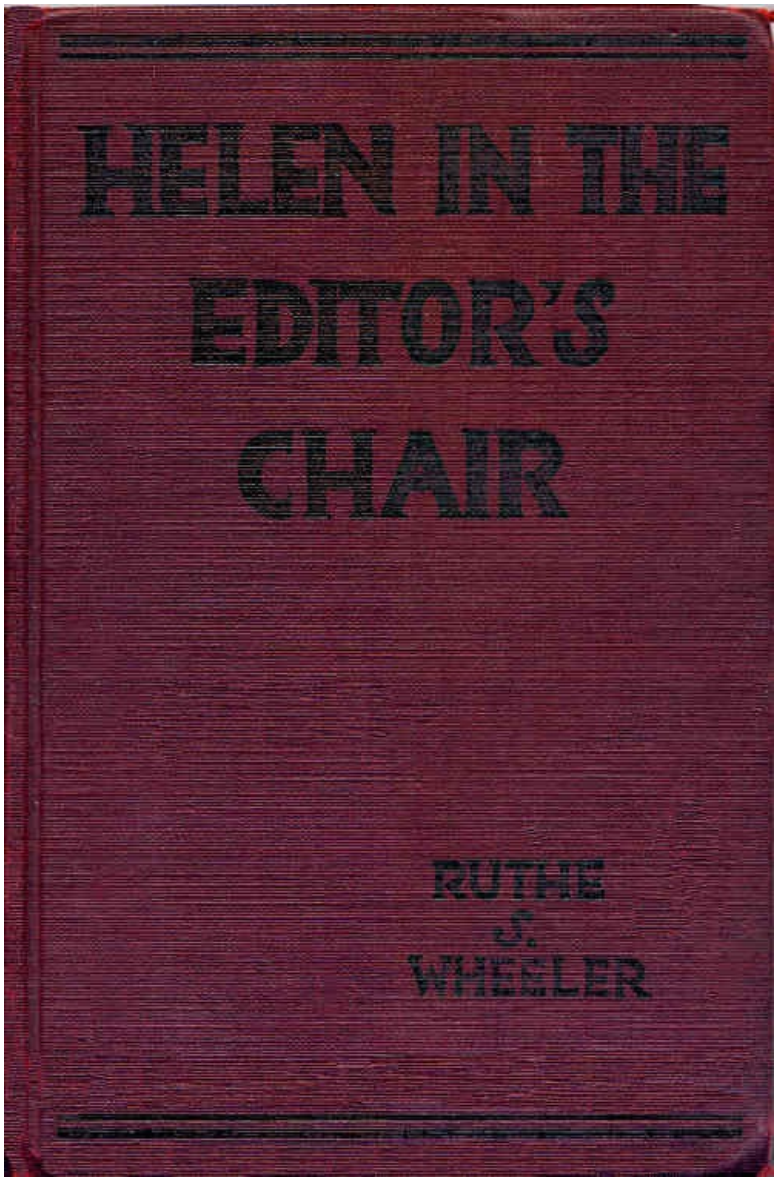
Author: Ruthe S. Wheeler

Release date: February 4, 2013 [EBook #42015]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HELEN IN THE EDITOR'S CHAIR ***

E-text prepared by
Stephen Hutcheson, Rod Crawford, Dave Morgan,
and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team
(http://www.pgdp.net)



HELEN
IN THE
EDITOR'S CHAIR

BY
RUTHE S. WHEELER

THE GOLDSMITH PUBLISHING COMPANY
CHICAGO

COPYRIGHT, 1932
THE GOLDSMITH PUBLISHING COMPANY
Made in U. S. A.

CHAPTER CONTENTS

[13]

Helen in the Editor's Chair

CHAPTER I
The Weekly Herald

Thursday!

Press day!

Helen Blair anxiously watched the clock on the wall of the assembly room. Five more minutes and school would be dismissed for the day. How those minutes dragged. She moved her books impatiently.

Finally the dismissal bell sounded. Helen straightened the books in her desk and, with the 162 others in the large assembly of the Rolfe High School, rose and marched down to the cloak room. She was glad that school was over for, to her, Thursday was the big day of the week.

Press day!

What magic lay in those two words.

By supper time the *Rolfe Herald* would be in every home in town and, when families sat down to their evening meal, they would have the paper beside them.

[14]

Helen's father, Hugh Blair, was the editor and publisher of the *Herald*. Her brother, Tom, a junior in high school, wrote part of the news and operated the Linotype, while Helen helped in the office every night after school and on Saturdays.

On Thursday her work comprised folding the papers as they came off the clanking press. Her arms ached long before her task was done, but she prided herself on the neatness of the stacks of papers that grew as she worked.

"Aren't you going to stay for the final sophomore debate tryouts?" asked Margaret Stevens. Margaret, daughter of the only doctor in Rolfe, lived across the street from the Blairs.

"Not this afternoon," smiled Helen, "this is press day."

“I’d forgotten,” laughed Margaret. “All right, hurry along and get your hands covered with ink.”

“Come over after supper and tell me about the tryouts,” said Helen.

“I will,” promised Margaret as she turned to the classroom where the tryouts were to be held.

The air was warm and Helen, with her spring coat over her arm, hurried from the high school building and started down the long hill that led to the main street.

Rolfe was a pretty midwestern village tucked away among the hills bordering Lake Dubar, a long, narrow body of water that attracted summer visitors from hundreds of miles away. **[15]**

The main street, built along a valley that opened out on the lake shore, was a broad, graveled street, flanked by a miscellaneous collection of stores and shops. Some of them were of weather-beaten red brick, others were of frame and a few of them, harking back to pioneer days, had false fronts. In the afternoon sun, it presented a quiet, friendly scene.

Helen reached the foot of the school house hill and turned on to the main street. On the right of the street and just two blocks from the lake shore stood the one-story frame structure housing the postoffice and her father’s printing plant. The postoffice occupied the front half of the building and the *Herald* office was the rear.

Helen walked down the alleyway between the postoffice and the Temple furniture store. She heard the noise of the press before she reached the office and knew that her father had started the afternoon run.

The *Herald*, an eight page paper, used four pages of ready print and four pages of home print. Each week’s supply of paper was shipped from Cranston, where four pages filled with prepared news and pictures, were printed. The other four, carrying local advertisements and news of Rolfe and vicinity were printed on the aged press in the *Herald* office. **[16]**

Helen hurried up the three steps leading to the editorial office. Its one unwashed window shut out the sunlight, and the office lay in a semi-shadow. Unable to see clearly after the brightness of the sunlight, she did not see her father at his desk when she entered the office.

“Hello, Dad,” she called as she took off her tam and sailed it along the counter where it finally came to rest against a stack of freshly printed *Heralds*.

Her father did not answer and Helen was on the point of going on into the composing room when she turned toward him. His head still rested on his arms and he gave no sign of having heard her.

Concerned over his silence, she hurried to his desk.

“Dad, Dad!” she cried. “What’s the matter! Answer me!”

Her father’s head moved and he looked up at **[17]**

her. His face was pale and there were dark hollows under his eyes.

"I'm all right, Helen," he said, but the usual smile was missing. "Just felt a little faint and came in here to take a few minutes rest. I'll be all right shortly. You go on and help Tom. I'll be with you in a while."

"But if you don't feel well, Dad, you'd better go home and rest," insisted Helen. "You know Tom and I can finish getting out the paper. Now you run along and don't worry about things at the office."

She reached for his hat and coat hanging on a hook at one side of the desk. He remonstrated at the prospect of going home with the work only half done, but Helen was adamant and her father finally gave in.

"Perhaps it will be best," he agreed as he walked slowly toward the door.

Helen watched him descend the steps; then saw him reach the street and turn toward home.

She was startled by the expression she had just seen on her father's face. He had never been particularly robust and now he looked as though something had come upon him which was crushing his mind and body. Illness, worry and apprehension had carved lines in his face that afternoon.

Helen went into the composing room where the Linotype, the rows of type cases, the makeup tables, the job press and the newspaper press were located. At the back end of the room was the large press, moving steadily back and forth as Tom, perched on a high stool, fed sheets of paper into one end. From the other came the freshly printed papers of that week's edition of the *Herald*. **[18]**

"Shut off the press," called Helen, shouting to make herself heard above the noise of the working machinery.

"What say?" cried Tom.

"Shut it off," his sister replied.

Tom scowled as he reached for the clutch to stop the press. He liked nothing better than running the press and when he had it well under way, usually printed the whole edition without a stop unless the paper became clogged or he had to readjust the ink rollers.

"What's the idea?" he demanded. "I'm trying to get through so I can play some baseball before dark."

"Dad's sick," explained Helen, "and I made him go home. Do you know what's the matter?" **[19]**

"Gosh, no," said Tom as he climbed down from his stool. "He wasn't feeling very well when I came down from school and said he was going in the office to rest, but I didn't know he felt that badly."

"Well, he did," replied Helen, "and I'm worried about him."

"We always take him more or less for granted.

He goes on year after year working in the office, getting enough together to make us all comfortable and hoping that he can send us to college some day. We help him when we can, but he plugs away day after day and I've noticed lately that he hasn't been very perky. Mother has been worried, too. I can tell from the way she acts when Dad comes home at night. She's always asking him how he feels and urging him to get to bed early. I tell you, Tom, something's wrong with Dad and we've got to find out and help him."

"Let's go get Doctor Stevens right now," said the impetuous Tom, and he reached to shut off the motor of the press.

"Not now," said Helen. "If Dad thought we weren't getting the paper out on time he'd worry all the more. We'll finish the paper and then have Doctor Stevens come over this evening. We can fix it so he'll just drop in for a social call."

"Good idea," said Tom as he climbed back on his stool and threw in the clutch. **[20]**

The press started its steady clanking and Helen picked up a pile of papers and spread them out on one of the makeup stones. Her father had printed two of the pages of home news during the morning and these sheets were stacked in a pile in one corner. She arranged two piles of papers on the makeup table, one pile which her father had printed and one of papers which were coming off the press as fast as Tom could keep it rolling.

Helen put on a heavy, blue-denim apron to protect her school dress and went to work. With nimble hands she put the sheets of paper together, folded them with a quick motion and slid the completed paper off the table and onto a box placed close by for that purpose.

The press, of unknown vintage, moved slowly and when Helen started at the same time as Tom she could fold the papers as rapidly as they were printed. But that day Tom, who had managed to be excused half an hour early, had too much of a start and when he finished the press run Helen still had several hundred papers to fold.

Tom stopped the press, shut off the motor, raised the ink rollers and then pulled the forms off the press and carried them to the other makeup table. After washing the ink off the type with a gasoline-soaked rag, he gathered an armful of papers Helen had folded and carried them into the editorial office. There he got out the long galleys which held the names of the subscribers. He inked each galley, placed it in the mailing machine, and then fed the papers into the mailer. They came out with the name of a subscriber printed at the top of each paper. **[21]**

The young Blairs worked silently, hastening to complete their respective tasks so they could hurry home. Tom had forgotten his plans to play baseball and all thought of the outcome of the debate tryouts had left Helen's mind. There was one thought uppermost in their minds. What was the matter with their father?

[22]

CHAPTER II
Startling News

The last paper folded, Helen removed the heavy apron and washed her hands at the sink behind the press. When she entered the editorial office Tom was putting the last of the papers through the mailer. They gathered them up, placed them in a large sack and carried them into the postoffice.

“We won’t stop to sweep out tonight,” said Helen. “Let’s lock up and then see Doctor Stevens on our way home. He’s usually in his office at this time.”

Tom agreed and, after putting away the mailing machine, locked the back door, closed the windows in the shop and announced that he was ready to go.

Helen locked the front door and they walked down main street toward the white, one-story building which housed the office of Doctor Stevens, the town’s only physician.

Tom was tall and slender with wavy, brown hair and brown eyes that were always alive with interest. Helen came scarcely above his shoulder, but she was five feet two of concentrated energy. She had left her tam at the office and the afternoon sun touched her blond hair with gold. Her eyes were the same clear blue as her mother’s and the rosy hue in her cheeks gave hint of her vitality.

They entered Doctor Stevens’ waiting room and found the genial physician reading a medical journal. **[23]**

“Hello, Helen! How are you Tom?” He boomed in his deep voice.

“We’re fine, Doctor Stevens,” replied Helen, “but we’re worried about Dad.”

“Why, what’s the matter with your father?” asked the doctor, adjusting his glasses.

“Dad wasn’t feeling very well when I came down from school at three-thirty,” said Tom, “and when I started the afternoon press run, he went into the office to rest a while. When Helen came in a little after four, Dad looked pretty rocky and she made him go home.”

“How did he look when you talked with him?” Doctor Stevens asked Helen.

“Awfully tired and mighty worried,” replied Helen. “It was his eyes more than anything else. He’s afraid of something and it has worried him until he is positively ill.”

“And haven’t you any idea what it could be?” asked the doctor.

“I’ve been thinking about it ever since Dad went home,” said Helen, “and I don’t know of a single thing that would worry him that much.” **[24]**

“Neither do I,” added Tom.

“What we’d like to have you do,” went on Helen, “is to drop in after supper. Make it look like a little social visit and it will give you a good excuse to give Dad the once over. We’ll be ever so much relieved if you will.”

“Of course I will,” the doctor assured them. “You’re probably worrying about some little thing and the more you think about it, the larger it grows. Possibly a little touch of stomach trouble. What have you been trying to cook, lately?” he asked Helen.

“Couldn’t be my cooking,” she replied. “I haven’t done any for a week and you know that Mother’s good cooking would never make anyone ill.”

“I’ll come over about seven-thirty,” promised Doctor Stevens, “and don’t you two worry yourselves over this. Your father will be all right in a day or two.”

Helen and Tom thanked Doctor Stevens and continued on their way home. They went back past the postoffice and the *Herald* and down toward the lake, whose waters reflected the rays of the setting sun in varied hues.

[25] A block from the lake shore they turned to their right into a tree-shaded street and climbed a gentle hill. Their home stood on a knoll overlooking the lake. It was an old-fashioned house that had started out as a three room cottage. Additions had been made until it rambled away in several directions. It boasted no definite style of architecture, but had a hominess that few houses possess. From the long, open front porch, there was an unobstructed view down the lake, which stretched away in the distance, its far reaches hidden in the coming twilight. A speed boat, being loaded with the afternoon mail for the summer resorts down the lake, was sputtering at the big pier at the foot of main street. A bundle of *Heralds* was placed on the boat and then it whisked away down the lake, a curving streak of white marking its passage.

Helen found her mother in the kitchen preparing their evening meal.

[26] Mrs. Blair, at forty-five, was a handsome woman. Her hair had decided touches of gray but her face still held the peachbloom of youth and she looked more like an older sister than a mother. She had been a teacher in the high school at Rolfe when Hugh Blair had come to edit the country paper. The teacher and the editor had fallen in love and she had given up teaching and married him.

“How’s Dad?” Helen asked.

“He doesn’t feel very well,” her mother replied and Helen could see lines of worry around her mother’s eyes.

“Don’t worry, Mother,” she counselled. “Dad has been working too hard this year. In two more weeks school will be over and Tom and I can do most of the work on the paper. You two can plan on a fine trip and a real rest this summer.”

“I hope so,” said Mrs. Blair, “for your father certainly needs a change of some kind.”

Helen helped her mother with the preparations for supper, setting the table and carrying the food from the kitchen to the dining room where broad windows opened out on the porch.

Tom, who had been upstairs washing the last of the ink from his hands, entered the kitchen.

“Supper about ready?” he asked. “I’m mighty hungry tonight.”

“All ready,” smiled his mother. “I’ll call your father.”

Helen turned on the lights in the dining room and they waited for their father to come from his bedroom. They could hear low voices for several minutes and finally Mrs. Blair returned to the dining room. **[27]**

“We’ll go ahead and eat,” she managed to smile. “Your father doesn’t feel like supper right now.”

Tom started to say something, but Helen shook her head and they sat down and started their evening meal.

Mrs. Blair, usually gay and interested in the activities of the day, had little to say, but Helen talked of school and the activities and plans of the sophomore class.

“We’re going to have a picnic down the lake next Monday,” she said.

“That’s nothing,” said Tom, who was president of the junior class. “We’re giving the seniors the finest banquet they’ve ever had.”

Whereupon they fell into a heated argument over the merits of the sophomores and juniors, a question which had been debated all year without a definite decision. Sometimes Tom considered himself the victor while on other occasions Helen had the best of the argument.

Supper over, Helen helped her mother clear the table and wash the dishes. It was seven-thirty before they had finished their work in the kitchen and Mrs. Blair was on her way to her husband’s room when Doctor Stevens, bag in hand, walked in. **[28]**

A neighbor for many years, the genial doctor did not stop to knock.

“Haven’t been in for weeks,” he said, “so thought I’d drop over and chin with Hugh for a while.”

“Hugh isn’t feeling very well,” said Mrs. Blair. “He came home from the office this afternoon and didn’t want anything for supper.”

“Let me have a look at him,” said Doctor Stevens. “Suppose his stomach is out of whack or something like that.”

Tom and Helen, standing in the dining room, watched Doctor Stevens and their mother go down the hall to their father’s bedroom.

The next half hour was one of the longest in their young lives. Tom tried to read the continued story in the *Herald*, while Helen fussed at first one thing and then another.

The door of their father's room finally opened and Doctor Stevens summoned them.

Neither Tom nor Helen would ever forget the scene in their father's bedroom that night. Their mother, seated at the far side of the bed, looked at them through tear-dimmed eyes. **[29]**

Their father, reclining on the bed, looked taller than ever, and the lines of pain which Helen had noticed in his face that afternoon had deepened. His hands were moving nervously and his eyes were bright with fever.

"Sit down," said Doctor Stevens as he took a chair beside Hugh Blair's bed.

Tom was about to ask his father how he felt, when Doctor Stevens spoke again.

"We might as well face this thing together," he said. "I'll tell you now that it is going to be something of a fight for all of you, but unless I'm mistaken, the Blairs are all real fighters."

"What's the matter Doctor Stevens?" Helen's voice was low and strained.

"Your father must take a thorough rest," he said. "He will have to go to some southwestern state for a number of months. Perhaps it will only take six months, but it may be longer."

"But I can't be away that long," protested Hugh Blair. "I must think of my family, of the *Herald*."

"Your family must think of you now," said Doctor Stevens firmly. "That's why I wanted to talk this over with Tom and Helen."

"Just what is wrong, Dad?" asked Tom. **[30]**

Doctor Stevens answered the question.

"Lung trouble," he said quietly. "Your father has spent too many years bent over his desk in that dark cubbyhole of his—too many years without a vacation. Now he's got to give that up and devote a number of months to building up his body again."

Helen felt the blood racing through her body. Her throat went dry and her head ached. She had realized only that afternoon that her father wasn't well but she had not been prepared for Doctor Stevens' announcement.

The doctor was talking again.

"I blame myself partly," he was telling Hugh Blair. "You worked yourself into this almost under my eyes, and I never dreamed what was happening. Too close to you, I guess."

"When do you think Hugh should start for the southwest?" asked Helen's mother.

"Just as soon as we can arrange things," replied Doctor Stevens. "This is Thursday. I'd like to have him on the way by Saturday night. Every day counts."

"That's impossible," protested Hugh Blair, half rising from his bed. "I don't see how I can possibly afford it. Think of the expense of a trip down there, of living there. What about the *Herald*? What about my family?"

A plan had been forming in Helen's mind from the time Doctor Stevens had said her father must go to a different climate. **[31]**

"Everything will be all right, Dad," she said. "There isn't a reason in the world why you shouldn't go. Tom and I are capable of running the *Herald* and with what you've saved toward our college educations, you can make the trip and stay as long as you want to."

"But I couldn't think of using your college money," protested her father, "even if you and Tom could run the *Herald*."

"Helen's got the right idea," said Doctor Stevens. "Your health must come above everything else right now. I'm sure those youngsters can run the *Herald*. Maybe they'll do an even better job than you," he added with a twinkle in his eyes.

"We can run the paper in fine shape, Dad," said Tom. "If you hired someone from outside to come in and take charge it would eat up all the profits. If Helen and I run the *Herald*, we'll have every cent we make for you and mother."

Mrs. Blair, who had been silent during the discussion, spoke.

"Hugh," she said, "Tom and Helen are right. I know how you dislike using their college money, but it is right that you should. I am sure that they can manage the *Herald*." **[32]**

Thus it was arranged that Tom and Helen were to take charge of the *Herald*. They talked with the superintendent of schools the next day and he agreed to excuse them from half their classes for the remaining weeks of school with the provision that they must pass all of their final examinations.

Friday and Saturday passed all too quickly. Helen busied herself collecting the current accounts and Tom spent part of the time at the office doing job work and the remainder at home helping with the packing.

Saturday noon Tom went to the bank and withdrew the $1,275 their father had placed in their college account. The only money left was $112 in the *Herald* account, just enough to take care of running expenses of the paper.

Hugh Blair owned his home and his paper, was proud of his family and his host of friends, but of actual worldly wealth he had little.

Doctor Stevens drove them to the Junction thirty miles away where Hugh Blair was to take the Southwestern limited. There was little conversation during the drive. **[33]**

The limited was at the junction when they arrived and goodbyes were brief.

Hugh Blair said a few words to his wife, who managed to smile through her tears. Then he turned to Tom and Helen.

"Take good care of the *Herald*," he told them, as he gave them a goodbye hug.

"We will Dad and you take good care of yourself," they called as he climbed into the

Pullman.

Cries of “boooo-ard,” sounded along the train. The porters swung their footstools up into the vestibules, the whistle sounded two short, sharp blasts, and the limited rolled away from the station.

Tom, Helen and their mother stood on the platform until the train disappeared behind a hill.

When they turned toward home, Tom and Helen faced the biggest responsibility of their young lives. It was up to them to continue the publication of the *Herald*, to supply the money to keep their home going and to build up a reserve which their father could call upon if he was forced to use all the money from their college fund.

[34]

CHAPTER III
In the Editor’s Chair

Sunday morning found Tom and Helen Blair entering a new era in their lives. While their father sped toward the southwest in quest of renewed health, they planned how they could develop the *Herald*.

Their mother was silent through breakfast and several times they saw her eyes dim with tears.

“Don’t worry, Mother,” said Helen. “We’ll manage all right and Dad is going to pull through in fine shape. Why, he’ll be back with us by Christmas time.”

“I wish I could be as optimistic as you are, Helen,” said Mrs. Blair.

“You’ll feel better in a few more hours,” said Tom. “It’s the suddenness of it all. Now we’ve got to buckle down and make the *Herald* keep on paying dividends.”

Tom and Helen helped their mother clear away the breakfast dishes and then dressed for Sunday school. Mrs. Blair taught a class of ten-to-twelve-year-old girls. Tom and Helen were in the upper classes.

[35]

The Methodist church they attended was a red brick structure, the first brick building built in Rolfe, and it was covered with English ivy that threatened even to hide the windows. The morning was warm and restful and they enjoyed the walk from home to church.

The minister was out of town on his vacation and there were no church services. After Sunday school the Blairs walked down to the postoffice. The large mail box which was rented for the *Herald* was filled with papers, circulars and letters.

“We might as well go back to the office and sort this out,” said Tom, and Mrs. Blair and Helen agreed.

The office was just as Tom and Helen had left it Thursday night for they had been too busy since then helping with the arrangements for their father's departure to clean it up.

The type was still in the forms, papers were scattered on the floor and dust had gathered on the counter and the desk which had served Hugh Blair for so many years.

"I'll open the windows and the back door," said Tom, "and we'll get some air moving through here. It's pretty stuffy."

Mrs. Blair sat down in the swivel chair in front of her husband's desk and Helen pulled up the only other chair in the office, an uncomfortable straight-backed affair. **[36]**

"You're editor now," Mrs. Blair told Helen. "You'd better start in by sorting the mail."

"Tom's in charge," replied Helen as her brother returned to the office.

"Let's not argue," said Tom. "We'll have a business meeting right now. Mother, you represent Dad, who is the owner. Now you decide who will be what."

"What will we need?" smiled Mrs. Blair.

"We need a business manager first," said Helen.

"Wrong," interjected Tom. "It's a publisher."

"Then I say let's make it unanimous and elect mother as publisher," said Helen.

"Second the motion," grinned Tom.

"If there are no objections, the motion is declared passed," said Helen. "And now Mother, you're the duly elected publisher of the *Rolfe Herald*."

"I may turn out to be a hard-boiled boss," said Mrs. Blair, but her smile belied her words.

"We're not worrying a whole lot," said Tom. "The next business is selecting a business manager, a mechanical department, an editor, and a reporter. Also a couple of general handymen capable of doing any kind of work on a weekly newspaper."

"That sounds like a big payroll for a paper as small as the *Herald*," protested Mrs. Blair. **[37]**

"I think you'll be able to get them reasonable," said Tom.

"In which case," added Helen, "you'd better appoint Tom as business manager, mechanical department, and handyman."

"And you might as well name Helen as editor, reporter and first assistant to the handyman," grinned Tom.

"I've filled my positions easier than I expected," smiled Mrs. Blair. "As publisher, I'll stay at home and keep out of your way."

"Mother, we don't want you to do that," exclaimed Helen. "We want you to come down and help us whenever you have time."

“But what could I do?” asked her mother.

“Lots of things. For instance, jot down all of the personal items you know about your friends and about all of the club meetings. That would be a great help to me. Sometimes in the evening maybe you’d even find time to write them up, for Tom and I are going to be frightfully busy between going to school and running the *Herald*.”

“I’ll tell the town,” said Tom. “If you’d handle the society news, Mother, you could make it a great feature. The *Herald* has never paid much attention to the social events in town. Guess Dad was too busy. But I think the women would appreciate having all of their parties written up. I could set up a nice head, ‘Society News of Rolfe,’ and we’d run a column or so every week on one of the inside pages.” **[38]**

“You’re getting me all excited, Tom,” said his mother. “Your father said I never would make a newspaper woman but if you and Helen will have a little patience with me, I’d really enjoy writing the social items.”

“Have patience with you, Mother?” said Helen. “It’s a case of whether you’ll have patience with us.”

“We’re going to have to plan our time carefully,” said Tom, “for we’ll have to keep up in our school work. I’ve got it doped out like this. Superintendent Fowler says Helen and I can go half days and as long as we cover all of the class work, receive full credit. The first half of the week is going to be the busiest for me. I’ll have to solicit my ads, set them up, do what job work I have time for and set up the stories Helen turns out for the paper. I could get in more time in the afternoon than in the morning so Helen had better plan on taking the mornings on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday away from school.”

“It will work out better for her, too,” went on Tom. “Many of the big news events happen over the week-end and she’ll be on the job Monday morning. I’ll have every afternoon and evening for my share of the work and for studying. Then we’ll both take Thursday afternoon away from school and get the paper out. And on Friday, Mother, if you’ll come down and stay at the office, we’ll go to school all day. How does that sound?” **[39]**

“Seems to me you’ve thought of everything,” agreed Helen. “I like the idea of doing my editorial work in the mornings the first part of the week and I’ll be able to do some of it after school hours.”

“Then it looks like the *Herald* staff is about ready to start work on the next issue,” said Tom. “We have a publisher, a business manager and an editor. What we need now are plenty of ads and lots of news.”

“What would you say, Mother, if Tom and I stayed down at the office a while and did some cleaning up?” asked Helen.

“Under the circumstances, I haven’t any objections,” said their mother. “There isn’t any church service this morning and you certainly **[40]**

can put in a few hours work here in the office to good advantage. I'll stay and help you with the dusting and sweeping."

"You run on home and rest," insisted Helen. "Also, don't forget Sunday dinner. We'll be home about two or two-thirty, and we'll be hungry by that time."

Mrs. Blair picked up the Sunday papers and after warning Tom and Helen that dinner would be ready promptly at two-thirty, left them in the office.

"Well, Mr. Business Manager, what are you going to start on?" asked Helen.

"Mr. Editor," replied Tom, "I've got to throw in all the type from last week's forms. What are you going to do?"

"The office needs a good cleaning," said Helen. "I'm going to put on my old apron and spend an hour dusting and mopping. You keep out or you'll track dirt in while I'm doing it."

Tom took off the coat of his Sunday suit, rolled up his shirt sleeves and donned the ink-smeared apron he wore when working in the composing room. Helen put on the long apron she used when folding papers and they went to work with their enthusiasm at a high pitch. Their task was not new but so much now depended on the success of their efforts that they found added zest in everything they did. **[41]**

Helen went through the piles of old papers on her father's desk, throwing many of them into the large cardboard carton which served as a wastebasket. When the desk was finally in order, she turned her attention to the counter. Samples of stationery needed to be placed in order and she completely rearranged the old-fashioned show case with its display of job printing which showed what the *Herald* plant was capable of doing.

With the desk and counter in shape, Helen picked up all of the papers on the floor, pulled the now heavily laden cardboard carton into the composing room, and then secured the mop and a pail of water. The barber shop, located below the postoffice, kept the building supplied with warm water, and Helen soon had a good pail of suds.

Tom stopped his work in the composing room and came in to watch the scrubbing.

"First time that floor has been scrubbed in years," he said.

"I know it," said Helen as she swished her mop into the corners. "Dad was running the paper and Mother was too busy bringing us up to come down here and do it for him." **[42]**

"He'll never recognize the old place when he comes back," said Tom.

"We'll brighten it up a little," agreed Helen, as Tom returned to his task of throwing in the type.

Helen had the editorial office thoroughly cleaned by one o'clock and sat down in her father's swivel chair to rest. Tom called in from the back room.

“You’d better plan your editorial work for the week,” he said. “I want to run the Linotype every afternoon and you’ll have to have copy for me.”

“What do you want first?” said Helen.

“Better get the editorials ready today,” he replied. “They don’t have to be absolutely spot copy. Dad wrote the first column himself and then clipped a column or a column and a half from nearby papers.”

“I’ll get at it right away,” said Helen. “The exchanges for last week are on the desk. After I’ve gone through them I’ll write my own editorials.”

“Better have one about Dad going away,” said Tom and there was a queer catch in his voice.

Helen did not answer for her eyes filled with a strange mist and her throat suddenly felt dry and full. **[43]**

Their father’s departure for the southwest had left a great void in their home life but Helen knew they would have to make the best of it. She was determined that their efforts on the *Herald* be successful.

Helen turned to the stack of exchanges which were on the desk and opened the editorial page of the first one. She was a rapid reader and she scanned paper after paper in quest of editorials which would interest readers of the *Herald*. When she found one she snipped it out with a handy pair of scissors and pasted it on a sheet of copy paper. Six or seven were needed for the *Herald’s* editorial page and it took her half an hour to get enough. With the clipped editorials pasted and new heads written on them, Helen turned to the typewriter to write the editorials for the column which her father was accustomed to fill with his own comments on current subjects.

Helen had stacked the copypaper in a neat pile on the desk and she took a sheet and rolled it into the typewriter. She had taken a commercial course the first semester and her mastery of the touch system of typing was to stand her in good stead for her work as editor of the *Herald*.

For several minutes the young editor of the *Herald* sat motionless in front of her typewriter, struggling to find the right words. She knew her father would want only a few simple sentences about his enforced absence from his duties as publisher of the paper. **[44]**

Then Helen got the idea she wanted and her fingers moved rapidly over the keys. The leading editorial was finished in a short time. It was only one paragraph and Helen took it out of the machine and read it carefully.

> “Mr. Hugh Blair, editor and publisher of the *Herald* for the last twenty years, has been compelled, by ill health, to leave his work at Rolfe and go to a drier climate for at least six months. In the meantime, we ask your cooperation and help in our efforts to carry out Mr. Blair’s ideals in the publication of the *Herald*.
>
> Signed,

Mrs. Hugh Blair, Helen and Tom Blair.”

After reading the editorial carefully, Helen called to her brother.

“Come in and see what you think of my lead editorial,” she said.

Tom, his hands grimy with ink from the type he had been throwing into the cases, came into the editorial office. **[45]**

He whistled in amazement at the change Helen had brought about. The papers were gone from the floor, which had been scrubbed clean, and the desk and counter were neat and orderly.

“Looks like a different office,” he said. “But wait until I have a chance to swing a broom and mop in the composing room. And I’m going to fix some of the makeup tables so they’ll be a little handier.”

Helen handed him the editorial and Tom read it thoughtfully.

“It’s mighty short,” he said, “but it tells the story.”

“Dad wouldn’t want a long sob story,” replied Helen. “Here’s the clipped editorials. You can put them on the hook on your Linotype and I’ll bring the others out as soon as I write them.”

Tom returned to the composing room with the handful of editorial copy Helen had given him and the editor of the *Herald* resumed her duties.

She wrote an editorial on the beauty of Rolfe in the spring and another one on the desirability for a paved road between Rolfe and Gladbrook, the county seat. In advocating the paved road, Helen pointed to the increased tourist traffic which would be drawn to Rolfe as soon as a paved road made Lake Dubar accessible to main highways. **[46]**

It was nearly two o’clock when she finished her labor at the typewriter. She was tired and hungry. One thing sure, being editor of the *Herald* would be no easy task. Of that she was convinced.

“Let’s go home for dinner,” she called to Tom.

“Suits me,” replied her brother. “I’ve finished throwing in the last page. We’re all ready to start work on the next issue.”

They took off their aprons and while Helen washed her hands, Tom closed the windows and locked the back door. He took his turn at the sink and they locked the front door and started for home.

“What we need now is a good, big story for our first edition,” said Tom.

“We may have it before nightfall if those clouds get to rolling much more,” said Helen.

Tom scanned the sky. The sunshine of the May morning had vanished. Ominous banks of clouds were rolling over the hills which flanked the western valley of Lake Dubar and the lake itself was lashed by white caps, spurred by a gusty

wind.

They went down main street, turned off on the side street and climbed the slope to their home. **[47]**

Mrs. Blair was busy putting some heavy pots over flowers she wanted to protect from the wind.

“Dinner’s all ready,” she told them, “and I’ve asked Margaret Stevens over. She wants to talk with Helen about the sophomore class picnic tomorrow.”

“I won’t have time to go,” said Helen. “We’ll be awfully busy working on the next issue.”

“You’re on the class committee, aren’t you?” asked Tom.

“Yes.”

“Then you’re going to the picnic. We’ll have lots to do on the *Herald* but we won’t have to give up all of our other activities.”

“Tom is right,” said Mrs. Blair. “You must plan on going to the picnic.”

Margaret Stevens came across the street from her home. Margaret was a decided brunette, a striking contrast to Helen’s blondness.

“We’ll go in and eat,” said Mrs. Blair. “Then we’ll come out and watch the storm. There is going to be a lot of wind.”

Margaret was jolly and good company and Helen thought her mother wise to have a guest for dinner. It kept them from thinking too much about their father’s absence. **[48]**

There was roast beef and hashed brown potatoes with thick gravy, lettuce salad, pickled beets, bread and butter, large glasses of rich milk and lemon pie.

“I’ve never tasted a better meal,” said Tom between mouthfuls.

“That’s because you’ve been so busy at the office,” smiled his mother.

“We were moving right along,” agreed Tom. “I got the forms all ready for the next issue and Helen has the editorials done.”

“Won’t you need a reporter?” asked Margaret.

“We may need one but Helen and Mother are going to try and do all the news writing,” said Tom.

“I mean a reporter who would work for nothing. I’d like to help for I’ve always wanted to write.”

“You could be a real help, Margaret,” said Helen, “and we’d enjoy having you help us. Keep your ears open for all of the personal items and tell Mother about any parties. She’s going to write the society news.”

“We’re getting quite a staff,” smiled Tom. “I’m open for applications of anyone who wants to work in the mechanical department.” **[49]**

“That’s not as romantic as gathering and writing news,” said Margaret.

“But just as important,” insisted Tom.

The room darkened and a particularly heavy gust of wind shook the house. From the west came a low rumbling.

Tom dropped his knife and fork and went to the front porch.

“Come here, Helen!” he cried. “The storm’s breaking. You’re going to have your first big story right now!”

[50]

CHAPTER IV
Through the Storm

Tom’s cry brought the others from the dinner table to the screened-in porch which overlooked the lake. He was right. The storm was roaring down out of the hills in the west in all its fury.

The black clouds which had been rolling along the horizon when Tom and Helen had come home were massed in a solid, angry front. Driven by a whistling wind, they were sweeping down on the lake. An ominous fringe of yellow wind clouds dashed on ahead and as they reached the porch they saw the waters of Lake Dubar whiten before the fury of the wind.

“Looks like a twister,” shouted Tom.

His mother’s face whitened and she anxiously scanned the sky.

Doctor Stevens ran across from his home.

“Better close all your windows and secure the doors,” he warned. “We’re going to get a lot of wind before the rain comes.”

“Tom is afraid of a tornado,” said Mrs. Blair.

“The weather is about right,” admitted the doctor. “But we won’t worry until we see the clouds start to swirl. Then we’ll run for the storm cellar under my house.”

[51]

Helen and Margaret hurried to help Mrs. Blair close the upstairs windows while Tom went around to make sure that the screens were secure. He bolted all doors except the one to the porch and when he returned to join the others, the tempo of the wind was increasing rapidly.

The wind suddenly dropped to a whisper and Doctor Stevens watched the rolling clouds with renewed anxiety. The waters of the lake were calmer and the dust clouds which the wind had driven over the water cleared partially.

“Look!” cried Helen. “There’s a motorboat trying to reach one of the boathouses here!”

Through the haze of dust which still hung over the lake they could discern the outline of a boat, laboring to reach the safety of the Rolfe end of the lake.

“It’s Jim Preston,” said Doctor Stevens. “He goes

down to the summer resorts at the far end of the lake every Sunday morning with the mail and papers."

"His boat's got a lot of water in it from the way it is riding," added Tom. "If the storm hits him he'll never make it."

"Jim should have known better than to have taken a chance when he could see this mess of weather brewing," snorted the doctor. **[52]**

"His wife's sick," put in Mrs. Blair, "and Jim's probably taken an extra risk to get home as soon as possible."

"I know," said Doctor Stevens.

"He's bailing by hand," cried Tom. "That means something has gone wrong with the water pump on the engine."

"Can you see what boat he has?" asked Doctor Stevens.

"It looks like the Flyer," said Helen, who knew the lines of every motorboat on the lake.

"That's the poorest wet weather boat Jim has," said Doctor Stevens. "Every white cap slops over the side. She's fast but a death trap in a storm. Either the Liberty or the Argosy would eat up weather like this."

"Jim's been overhauling the engines in his other boats," said Tom, "and the Flyer is the only thing he has been using this spring."

"Instead of standing here talking, let's get down to the shore," said Helen. "Maybe we can get someone to go out and help him."

Without waiting for the others to reply, Helen started running toward the lake. She heard a cry behind her and turned to see Tom pointing toward the hills in the west. **[53]**

The wind was whistling again and when she turned to look in the direction her brother pointed, she stopped suddenly. The black storm clouds were massing for the main attack and they were rolling together.

In the seconds that Helen watched, she saw them swirl toward a common center, heard the deafening rise of the wind and trembled as the clouds, now formed in a great funnel, started toward the lake.

"Come back, Helen, come back!" Tom shouted.

Forcing herself to overcome the storm terror which now gripped her, Helen looked out over the boiling waters of the lake.

The wind was whipping into a new frenzy and she could just barely see the Flyer above the white-capped waves. Jim Preston was making a brave effort to reach shore and Helen knew that the little group at her own home were probably the only ones in Rolfe who knew of the boatman's danger. Seconds counted and ignoring the warning cries from her brother, she hurried on toward the lake.

The noise of the oncoming tornado beat on her ears, but she dared not look toward the west. If **[54]**

she did she knew she would turn and race for the shelter and security of Doctor Stevens' storm cellar.

The Flyer was rolling dangerously as Jim Preston made for the shore and Helen doubted if the boatman would ever make it.

On and on the sleek craft pushed its way, the waves breaking over its slender, speedy nose and cascading back into the open cockpit in which Jim Preston was bailing furiously. The Flyer was nosing deeper into the waves as it shipped more water. When the ignition wires got wet the motor would stop and Preston's last chance would be gone.

Helen felt someone grab her arms. It was Tom.

"Come back!" he cried. "The tornado will be on us in another five minutes!"

"We've got to help Mr. Preston," shouted Helen, and she refused to move.

"All right, then I stay too," yelled Tom, who kept anxious eyes on the approaching tornado.

The Flyer was less than a hundred yards from shore but was settling deeper and deeper into the water.

"It's almost shallow enough for him to wade ashore," cried Helen. **[55]**

"Wind would sweep him off his feet," replied Tom.

The speedboat was making slow progress, barely staggering along in its battle against the wind and waves.

"He's going to make it!" shouted Helen.

"I hope so," said Tom, but his words were lost in the wind.

Fifty yards more and the Flyer would nose into the sandy beach which marked the Rolfe end of the lake.

"Come on, Flyer, come on!" cried Helen.

"The engine's dying," said Tom. "Look, the nose is going under that big wave."

With the motor dead, the Flyer lost way and buried its nose under a giant white-cap.

"He's jumping out of the boat," added Helen. "It's shallow enough so he can wade in if he can keep his feet."

Ignoring the increasing danger of the tornado, they ran across the sandy beach.

"Join hands," cried Helen. "We can wade out and pull him the last few feet."

Realizing that his sister would go on alone if he did not help her, Tom locked his hands in hers and they plunged into the shallow water. **[56]**

Jim Preston, on the verge of exhaustion, staggered through the waves.

The Flyer, caught between two large rollers, filled with water and disappeared less than ten

seconds after it had been abandoned.

The boatman floundered toward them and Tom and Helen found themselves hard-pressed to keep their own feet, for a strong undertow threatened to upset them and sweep them out into the lake.

Preston lunged toward them and they caught him as he fell.

Tom turned momentarily to watch the approach of the tornado.

“Hurry!” he cried. “We’ll be able to reach Doctor Stevens’ storm cellar if we run.”

“I can’t run,” gasped Preston. “You youngsters get me to shore. Then save yourselves.”

“We’ll do nothing of the kind,” said Helen.

With their encouragement, Preston made a new effort and they made their escape from the dangerous waters of the lake.

Alone, Helen or Tom could have raced up the hill to Doctor Stevens in less than a minute but with an almost helpless man to drag between them, they made slow progress.

“We’ve got to hurry,” warned Tom as the noise of the storm told of its rapid approach. **[57]**

“Go on, go on! Leave me here!” urged Preston.

But Helen and Tom were deaf to his pleas and they forced him to use the last of his strength in a desperate race up the hill ahead of the tornado.

Doctor Stevens met them half way up the hill and almost carried Preston the rest of the way.

“Across the street and into my storm cellar,” he told them.

“Is the tornado going to hit the town?” asked Helen as they hurried across the street.

“Can’t tell yet,” replied Doctor Stevens.

“There’s a common belief that the hills and lake protect us so a tornado will never strike here,” said Tom.

“We’ll soon know about that,” said the doctor grimly.

They got the exhausted boatman to the entrance of the cellar, where Mrs. Blair was anxiously awaiting their return.

“Are you all right, Helen?” she asked.

“A little wet on my lower extremities,” replied the young editor of the *Herald*. “I simply had to go, mother.”

“Of course you did,” said Mrs. Blair. “It was dangerous but I’m proud of you Helen.”

Mrs. Stevens brought out blankets and wrapped them around Jim Preston’s shoulders while Margaret took candles down into the storm cellar. **[58]**

The noise of the storm had increased to such an

intensity that conversation was almost impossible.

Doctor Stevens maintained his watchful vigil, noting every movement of the tornado.

The sky was so dark that the daylight had faded into dusk although it was only a few minutes after three. The whole western sky was filled with coal-black clouds and out of the center of this ominous mass rushed the lashing tongue which was destroying everything it touched.

On and on came the storm, advancing with a deadly relentlessness. A farm house a little more than a mile away on one of the hills overlooking the lake exploded as though a charge of dynamite had been set off beneath it.

“It’s terrible, terrible,” sobbed Margaret Stevens, who had come out of the cellar to watch the storm.

“We’re going to get hit,” Tom warned them.

“I’ve got to get home,” said Jim Preston, struggling out of the blankets which Mrs. Stevens had wrapped around him. “My wife’s all alone.”

“Stay here, Jim,” commanded Doctor Stevens. “You couldn’t get more than three or four blocks before the storm strikes and your place is clear across town. Everybody into the cellar,” he commanded. **[59]**

Mrs. Stevens and Helen’s mother went first to light the candles. They were followed by Margaret and Helen, then Tom and Jim Preston and finally the doctor, who remained in the doorway on guard.

“What will this do to the *Herald*?” Helen whispered to Tom.

Her brother nudged her hard.

“Don’t let Mother hear you,” he replied. “There is nothing we can do now except hope. The *Herald* building may not be destroyed.”

Helen dropped to the floor and her head bowed in prayer. Their father’s illness had been a blow and to have the *Herald* plant destroyed by a tornado would be almost more than they could bear.

The noise of the tornado was terrific and they felt the earth trembling at the fury of the storm gods.

Helen had seen pictures of towns razed by tornadoes but she had never dreamed that she would be in one herself.

Suddenly the roar of the storm lessened and Doctor Stevens cautiously opened the door of the storm cellar. **[60]**

“We’re safe!” he cried.

They trooped out of the cellar. The tornado had swung away from Rolfe without striking the town itself and was lashing its way down the center of Lake Dubar.

“It will wear itself out before it reaches the end

of the lake," predicted Jim Preston.

"I don't believe any houses in town were damaged," said Doctor Stevens. "A hen house and garage or two may have been unroofed but that will be about all."

"How about the farmers back in the hills?" asked Helen.

"They must have fared pretty badly if they were in the center of the storm," said the doctor. "I'm going to get my car and start out that way. Someone may need medical attention."

"Can I go with you?" asked Helen. "I want to get all the facts about the storm for my story for the *Herald*."

"Glad to have you," said the doctor.

"Count me in," said Margaret Stevens. "I've joined Helen's staff as her first reporter," she told her father.

"If you want to go down the lake in the morning and see what happened at the far end I'll be glad to take you," suggested Jim Preston. "I'm mighty grateful for what you and Tom did for me and I'll have the Liberty ready to go by morning." **[61]**

"What about the Flyer?" asked Tom.

"I'll have to fish her out of the lake sometime next week," grinned the boatman. "I'm lucky even to be here, but I am, thanks to you."

Doctor Stevens backed his sedan out of the garage and Helen started toward the car.

"You can't go looking like that," protested her mother. "Your shoes and hose are wet and dirty and your dress looks something like a mop."

"Can't help the looks, mother," smiled Helen. "I'll have to go as I am. This is my first big news and the story comes first."

[62]

CHAPTER V
Reporting Plus

Clouds which followed the terrific wind unleashed their burden and a gray curtain of rain swept down from the heavens.

"Get your slickers," Doctor Stevens called to the girls and Helen raced across the street for her coat and a storm hat.

"Better put on those heavy, high-topped boots you use for hiking," Tom advised Helen when they had reached the shelter of their own home. "You'll probably be gone the rest of the afternoon and you'll need the boots."

Helen nodded her agreement and rummaged through the down stairs closet for the sturdy boots. She dragged them out and untangled the laces. Then she kicked off her oxfords and started to slide her feet into the boots. Her

mother stopped her.

"Put on these woolen stockings," she said. "Those light silk ones will wear through in an hour and your heels will be chafed raw."

With heavy stockings and boots on, Helen slipped into the slicker which Tom held for her. She put on her old felt hat just as Doctor Stevens' car honked. **[63]**

"Bye, Mother," she cried. "Don't worry. I'll be all right with the doctor and Margaret."

"Get all the news," cautioned Tom as Helen ran through the storm and climbed into the doctor's sedan.

Margaret Stevens was also wearing heavy shoes and a slicker while the doctor had put on knee length rubber boots and a heavy ulster.

"We'll get plenty of rain before we're back," he told the girls, "and we'll have to walk where the roads are impassable."

They stopped down town and Doctor Stevens ran into his office to see if any calls had been left for him. When he returned his face was grave.

"What's the matter?" asked Margaret.

"I called the telephone office," replied her father, "and they said all the phone wires west of the lake were down but that reports were a number of farm houses had been destroyed by the tornado."

"Then you think someone may have been hurt?" asked Helen.

"I'm afraid so," admitted Doctor Stevens as he shifted gears and the sedan leaped ahead through the storm. "We'll have to trust to luck that we'll reach farms where the worst damage occurred." **[64]**

The wind was still of nearly gale force and the blasts of rain which swept the graveled highway rocked the sedan. There was little conversation as they left Rolfe and headed into the hill country which marked the western valley of Lake Dubar.

The road wound through the hills and Doctor Stevens, unable to see more than fifty feet ahead, drove cautiously.

"Keep a close watch on each side," he told the girls, "and when you see any signs of unusual damage let me know."

They were nearly three miles from Rolfe when Margaret told her father to stop.

"There's a lane to our right that is blocked with fallen tree trunks," she said.

Doctor Stevens peered through the rain. A mail box leered up at them from a twisted post.

"This is Herb Lauer's place," he said. "I'll get out and go up the lane."

The doctor picked up his medical case and left the motor running so the heat it generated would keep ignition wires dry.

One window was left open to guard against the car filling with gas and the girls followed him into the storm. They picked their way slowly over the fallen trees which choked the lane. When they finally reached the farmyard a desolate scene greeted them. **[65]**

The tornado, like a playful giant, had picked up the one story frame house and dashed it against the barn. Both buildings had splintered in a thousand pieces and only a huddled mass of wreckage remained. Miraculously, the corn crib had been left almost unharmed and inside the crib they could see someone moving.

Doctor Stevens shouted and a few seconds later there came an answering cry. The girls followed him to the crib and found the family of Herb Lauer sheltered there.

“Anyone hurt?” asked Doctor Stevens.

“Herb’s injured his arm,” said Mrs. Lauer, who was holding their two young children close to her.

“Think it’s broken, Doc,” said the farmer.

“Broken is right,” said Doctor Stevens as he examined the injury. “I’ll fix up a temporary splint and in the morning you can come down and have it redressed.”

The doctor worked quickly and when he was ready to put on the splint had Margaret and Helen help him. In twenty minutes the arm had been dressed and put in a sling.

“We’ll send help out as soon as we can,” said Doctor Stevens as they turned to go. **[66]**

Helen had used the time to good advantage, making a survey of the damage done to the farm buildings and learning that they were fully protected by insurance. Mrs. Lauer, between attempts to quiet the crying of the children, had given Helen an eye-witness account of the storm and how they had taken refuge in the corn crib just before the house was swirled from its foundations.

Back in the car, the trio continued their relief trip. The rain abated and a little after four o’clock the sun broke through the clouds. Ditches along the road ran bankful with water and streams they crossed tore at the embankments which confined them.

“The worst is over,” said Doctor Stevens, “and we can be mighty thankful no one has been killed.”

Fifteen minutes later they reached another farm which had felt the effects of the storm. The house had been unroofed but the family had taken refuge in the storm cellar. No one had been injured, except for a few bruises and minor scratches.

At dusk they were fifteen miles west of Rolfe and had failed to find anyone with serious injury. **[67]**

“We’ve about reached the limit of the storm area,” said Doctor Stevens. “We’ll turn now and start back for Rolfe on the Windham road.”

Their route back led them over a winding road

and before they left the main graveled highway Doctor Stevens put chains on his car. They ploughed into the mud, which sloshed up on the sides of the machine and splattered against the windshield until they had to stop and clean the glass.

Half way back to Rolfe they were stopped by a lantern waving in the road.

Doctor Stevens leaned out the window.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

A farmer stepped out of the night into the rays of the lights of the car.

“We need help,” he cried. “The storm destroyed our house and one of my boys was pretty badly hurt. We’ve got to get him to a doctor.”

“I’m Doctor Stevens of Rolfe,” said Margaret’s father as he picked up his case and opened the door.

“We need you doctor,” said the farmer.

Helen and Margaret followed them down the road and into a grassy lane.

Lights were flickering ahead and when they reached a cattle shed they found a wood fire burning. Around the blaze were the members of the farmer’s family and at one side of the fire was the blanket-swathed form of a boy of ten or eleven. **[68]**

“One of the timbers from the house struck him while he was running for the storm cave,” explained the farmer. “He just crumpled up and hasn’t spoken to us since. It’s as though he was asleep.”

Doctor Stevens examined the boy.

“He got a pretty nasty rap on the head,” he said. “What he needs is a good bed, some warm clothes and hot food. We’ll put him in my car and take him back to Rolfe. He’ll be all right in two or three days.”

The doctor looked about him.

“This is the Rigg Jensen place, isn’t it?” he asked.

“I’m Rigg Jensen,” said the farmer. “You fixed me up about ten years ago when my shotgun went off and took off one of my little toes.”

“I remember that,” said Doctor Stevens. “Now, if you’ll help me carry the lad, we’ll get him down to the car.”

“Hadn’t I better go?” asked Mrs. Jensen. “Eddie may be scared if he wakes up and sees only strangers.” **[69]**

“Good idea,” said Doctor Stevens, as they picked up the boy and started for the car.

Helen went ahead, carrying the lantern and lighting the way for the men. They made the boy comfortable in the back seat and his mother got in beside him.

“Better come along,” Doctor Stevens told the father.

“Not tonight,” was the reply. “Mother is with Eddie and I know he’ll be all right now. I’ve got to take the lantern and see what happened to the livestock and what we’ve got left.”

There was no complaint in his voice, only a matter-of-factness which indicated that the storm could not have been prevented and now that it was all over he was going to make the best of it.

Half an hour later they reached the gravel highway and sped into Rolfe. Doctor Stevens drove directly to his office and several men on the street helped him carry Eddie Jensen inside.

“You’d better run along home,” he told the girls, “and get something to eat.”

When Helen reached home, Tom was waiting on the porch.

“Get a story?” he asked. **[70]**

The young editor of the *Herald* nodded.

“Anyone hurt?” Tom insisted.

“No one seriously injured,” replied Helen, “but a lot of farm buildings were destroyed.”

“I’ve been checking up on the damage down the lake,” said Tom, “that new summer resort on the east shore got the worst of it. The phone office finally got through and they estimate the damage at the resort at about $50,000.”

“Doctor Stevens believes the damage along the west half of the valley will amount to almost a $100,000,” said Helen.

“That’s a real story,” enthused Tom. “It’s big enough to telephone to the state bureau of the Associated Press at Cranston. They’ll be glad to pay us for sending it to them.”

“You telephone,” said Helen. “I’d be scared to death and wouldn’t be able to give them all the facts.”

“You’re the editor,” replied Tom. “It’s your story and you ought to do the phoning. Jot down some notes while I get a connection to Cranston.”

Tom went into the house to put in the long distance call just as Helen’s mother hurried across from the Stevens home.

“Are you all right, dear?” her mother asked. **[71]**

“Not even wet,” replied Helen. “The coat and boots protected me even in the heaviest rain. Tom’s just gone inside to call the Associated Press at Cranston and I’m going to tell them about the storm.”

“Hurry up there,” came Tom’s voice from inside the house. “The Cranston operator has just answered.”

“And I haven’t had time to think what I’ll say,” added Helen, half to herself.

Without stopping to take off her cumbersome raincoat, she hurried to the telephone stand in the dining room and Tom turned the instrument over to her.

“All ready,” he said.

Helen picked up the telephone and heard a voice at the other end of the wire saying, “This is the state bureau of the Associated Press at Cranston. Who’s calling?”

Mustering up her courage, Helen replied, “this is Helen Blair, editor of the *Rolfe Herald*. We’ve had a tornado near here this afternoon and I thought you’d want the facts.”

“Glad to have them,” came the peppy voice back over the wire. “Let’s go.”

Helen forgot her early misgivings and briefly and concisely told her story about the storm, giving estimates of damage and the names of the injured. In three minutes she was through. **[72]**

“Fine story,” said the Associated Press man at Cranston. “We’ll mail you a check the first of the month. And say, you’d better write to us. We can use a live, wide-awake correspondent in your town.”

“Thanks, I will,” replied Helen as she hung up the receiver.

“What did he say?” asked Tom.

“He told me to write them; that they could use a correspondent at Rolfe.”

“That’s great,” exclaimed Tom. “One more way in which we can increase our income and it means that some day you may be able to get a job with the Associated Press.”

“That will have to come later,” said Helen’s mother, “when school days are over.”

“Sure, I know,” said Tom, “but creating a good impression won’t hurt anything.”

Mrs. Blair had a hot supper waiting, hamburger cakes, baking powder biscuits with honey, and tea, and they all sat down to the table for a belated evening meal.

Helen related the events of her trip with Doctor Stevens and Tom grew enthusiastic again over the story. **[73]**

“It’s the biggest news the *Herald* has had in years. If we were putting out a daily we’d be working on an extra now. Maybe the *Herald* will be a daily some day.”

“Rolfe will have to grow a lot,” smiled his mother.

“I guess you’re right,” agreed Tom.

Tom and Helen helped their mother clear away the supper dishes and after that Helen went into the front room and cleared the Sunday papers off the library table. She found some copypaper and a pencil in the drawer and sat down to work on her story of the storm.

The excitement of the storm and the ensuing events had carried her along, oblivious of the fatigue which had increased with the passing hours. But when she picked up her pencil and tried to write, her eyes dimmed and her head nodded. She snuggled her head in her arms to

rest for just a minute, she told herself. The next thing she knew Tom was shaking her shoulders.

"Ten o'clock," he said, "and time for all editors to be in bed."

Helen tried to rub the sleep from her eyes and Tom laughed uproariously at her efforts. [74]

"It's no use," he said. "You're all tired out. You can write your story in the morning. To bed you go."

"Have I been asleep all evening?" Helen asked her mother.

"Yes, dear," was the reply, "and I think Tom's right. Run along to bed and you'll feel more like working on your story in the morning."

Goodnights were said and Helen, only half awake, went to her room, thus ending the most exciting day in her young life.

[75]

CHAPTER VI
A New Week Dawns

Monday morning dawned clear and bright. There were no traces in the sky of the storm which on the previous day had devastated so many farms west of Rolfe. The air was warm with a fragrance and sweetness that only a small town knows in springtime.

Helen exchanged greetings with half a dozen people as she hurried down the street to start her first day at the office as editor of the *Herald*.

Grant Hughes, the postmaster, was busy sweeping out his office but he stopped his work and called to Helen as she turned down the alley-way which led to the *Herald* office.

"Starting in bright and early, aren't you?"

"Have to," smiled Helen, "for Tom and I have only half days in which to put out the paper and do the job work."

"I know, I know," mused the old postmaster, "but you're chips off the old block. You'll make good."

"Thanks, Mr. Hughes," said Helen. "Your believing in us is going to help."

She hastened on the few steps to the office and opened the doors and windows for the rooms were close and stuffy after being closed overnight. The young editor of the *Herald* paused to look around the composing room. Tom had certainly done a good job cleaning up the day before. The four steel forms which would hold the type for the week's edition were in place, ready for the news she would write and the ads which it would be Tom's work to solicit. The Linotype seemed to be watching her in a very superior but friendly manner and even the old press was polished and cleaned as never before. [76]

Helen returned to the editorial office, rolled a sheet of copypaper into her typewriter, and sat down to write the story of the storm. She might have to change certain parts of the story about the condition of the injured later in the week but she could get the main part of it written while it was still fresh in her memory.

Hugh Blair had always made a point of writing his news stories in simple English and he had drilled Helen and Tom in his belief that the simpler a story is written the more widely it will be read. He had no time for the multitudes of adjectives which many country editors insist upon using, although he felt that strong, colorful words had their place in news stories.

With her father's beliefs on news writing almost second nature, Helen started her story. It was simple and dramatic, as dramatic as the sudden descent of the storm on the valley. Her fingers moved rapidly over the keyboard and the story seemed to write itself. She finished one page and rolled another into the machine, hardly pausing in her rapid typing. **[77]**

Page after page she wrote until she finally leaned back in her swivel chair, tired from the strain of her steady work.

She picked up the half dozen pages of typed copy. This was her first big story and she wanted it to read well, to be something of which her father would be proud when he read the copy of the paper they would send him. She went over the story carefully, changing a word here, another there. Occasionally she operated on some of her sentences, paring down the longer ones and speeding up the tempo of the story. It was nine-thirty before she was satisfied that she had done the best she could and she stuck the story on the copy spindle, ready for Tom when he wanted to translate it into type on the Linotype.

Helen slid another sheet of copypaper into her typewriter and headed it "PERSONALS." Farther down the page she wrote four items about out-of-town people who were visiting in Rolfe. She had just finished her personals when she heard the whistle of the morning train. **[78]**

The nine forty-five in the morning and the seven-fifteen in the evening were the only trains through Rolfe on the branch line of the A. and T. railroad. The nine forty-five was the upbound train to Cranston, the state capital. It reached Cranston about one o'clock, turned around there and started back a little after three, passing through Rolfe on its down trip early in the evening, its over-night terminal being Gladbrook, the county seat.

Helen picked up a pencil and pad of paper, snapped the lock on the front door and ran for the depot two blocks away. The daily trains were always good for a few personals. She meant to leave the office earlier but had lost track of the time, so intense had been her interest in writing her story of the storm.

The nine forty-five was still half a mile below town and puffing up the grade to the station when Helen reached the platform. She spoke to the agent and the express man and hurried into the waiting room. Two women she recognized **[79]**

were picking up their suit cases when she entered. Helen explained her mission and they told her where they were going. She jotted down the notes quickly for the train was rumbling into town. The local ground to a stop and Helen went to the platform to see if anyone had arrived from the county seat.

One passenger descended, a tall, austere-looking man whose appearance was not in the least inviting but Helen wanted every news item she could get so she approached him, with some misgiving.

"I'm the editor for the *Rolfe Herald*," she explained, "and I'd like to have an item about your visit here."

"You're what?" exclaimed the stranger.

"I'm the editor of the local paper," repeated Helen, "and I'd like a story about your visit in town."

"You're pretty young for an editor," persisted the stranger, with a smile that decidedly changed his appearance and made him look much less formidable.

"I'm substituting for my father," said Helen.

"That quite explains things," agreed the stranger. "I'm Charles King of Cranston, state superintendent of schools, and I'm making a few inspections around the state. If you'd like, I'll see you again before I leave and tell you what I think of your school system here." **[80]**

"I'm sure you'll thoroughly approve," said Helen. "Mr. Fowler, the superintendent, is very progressive and has fine discipline."

"I'll tell him he has a good booster in the editor," smiled Mr. King. "Now, if you'll be good enough to direct me to the school I'll see that you get a good story out of my visit here."

Helen supplied the necessary directions and the state superintendent left the depot.

The nine forty-five, with its combination mail and baggage car and two day coaches, whistled out and Helen returned to the *Herald* office.

She found a farmer from the east side of the valley waiting for her.

"I'd like to get some sale bills printed," he said, "and I'll need about five hundred quarter page bills. How much will they cost?"

Helen opened the booklet with job prices listed and gave the farmer a quotation on the job.

"Sounds fair enough," he said. "At least it's a dollar less than last year."

"Paper doesn't cost quite as much," explained Helen, "and we're passing the saving on to you. Be sure and tell your neighbors about our reasonable printing prices." **[81]**

"I'll do that," promised the farmer. "I'll bring in the copy Tuesday and get the bills Friday morning."

"My brother will have them ready for you," said

Helen, “but if you want to get the most out of your sale, why not run your bill as an ad in the *Herald*. On a combination like that we can give you a special price. You can have a quarter page ad in the paper plus 500 bills at only a little more than the cost of the ad in the paper. It’s the cost of setting up the ad that counts for once it is set up we can run off the bills at very little extra cost.”

“How much circulation do you have?”

“Eight hundred and seventy-five,” said Helen. “Three hundred papers go in town and the rest out on the country routes.” She consulted her price book and quoted the price for the combination ad and bills.

“I’ll take it,” agreed the farmer, who appeared to be a keen business man.

“Tell you what,” he went on. “If you’d work out some kind of a tieup with the farm bureau at Gladbrook and carry a page with special farm news you could get a lot of advertising from farmers. If you do, don’t use ‘canned’ news sent out by agricultural schools. Get the county agent to write a column a week and then get the rest of it from farmers around here. Have items about what they are doing, how many hogs they are feeding, how much they get for their cattle, when they market them and news of their club activities.” **[82]**

“Sounds like a fine idea,” said Helen, “but we’ll have to go a little slowly at first. My brother and I are trying to run the paper while Dad is away recovering his health and until we get everything going smoothly we can’t attempt very many new things.”

“You keep it in mind,” said the farmer, “for I tell you, we people on the farms like to see news about ourselves in the paper and it would mean more business for you. Well, I’ve got to be going. I’ll bring my copy in tomorrow.”

“We’ll be expecting it,” said Helen. “Thanks for the business.”

She went around to the postoffice and returned with a handful of letters. Most of them were circulars but one of them was a card from her father. She read it with such eagerness that her hands trembled. It had been written while the train was speeding through southwestern Kansas and her father said that he was not as tired from the train trip as he had expected. By the time they received the card, he added, he would be at Rubio, Arizona, where he was to make his home until he was well enough to return to the more rigorous climate of the north. **[83]**

Helen telephoned her mother at once and read the message on the card.

“I’m going to write to Dad and tell him all about the storm and how happy we are that everything is going well for him,” said Helen.

“I’ll write this afternoon,” said her mother, “and we’ll put the letters in one envelope and get them off on the evening mail. Perhaps Tom will find time to add a note.”

Helen sat down at the desk, found several sheets

of office stationery and a pen, and started her letter to her father. She was half way through when Jim Preston entered.

"Good morning, Miss Blair," he said. "I've got the *Liberty* ready to go if you'd like to run down the lake and see how much damage the twister caused at the summer resorts."

"Thanks," replied Helen, "I'll be with you right away." She put her letter aside and closed the office. Five minutes later they were at the main pier on the lakeshore. **[84]**

The *Liberty*, a sturdy, 28-foot cruiser, was moored to the pier. The light oak hood covering the engine shone brightly in the morning sun and Helen could see that Jim Preston had waxed it recently. The hood extended for about fourteen feet back from the bow of the boat, completely enclosing the 60 horsepower engine which drove the craft. The steering wheel and ignition switches were mounted on a dash and behind this were four benches with leather covered cork cushions which could be used as life preservers.

The boatman stepped into the *Liberty* and pressed the starter. There was the whirr of gears and the muffled explosions from the underwater exhaust as the engine started. The *Liberty* quivered at its moorings, anxious to be away and cutting through the tiny whitecaps which danced in the sunshine.

Helen bent down and loosened the half hitches on the ropes which held the boat. Jim Preston steadied it while she stepped in and took her place on the front seat beside him.

The boatman shoved the clutch ahead, the tone of the motor deepened and they moved slowly away from the pier. With quickening pace, they sped out into the lake, slapping through the white caps faster and faster until tiny flashes of spray stung Helen's face. **[85]**

"How long will it take us to reach Crescent Beach?" asked Helen for she knew the boatman made his first stop at the new resort at the far end of the lake.

"It's nine miles," replied Jim Preston. "If I open her up we'll be down there in fifteen or sixteen minutes. Want to make time?"

"Not particularly," replied Helen, "but I enjoy a fast ride."

"Here goes," smiled Preston and he shoved the throttle forward.

The powerful motor responded to the increased fuel and the *Liberty* shook herself and leaped ahead, cutting a v-shaped swath down the center of the lake. Solid sheets of spray flew out on each side of the boat and Preston put up spray boards to keep them from being drenched.

Helen turned around and looked back at Rolfe, nestling serenely along the north end of the lake. It was a quiet, restful scene, the white houses showing through the verdant green of the new leaves. She could see her own home and thought she glimpsed her mother working in the garden at the rear. **[86]**

Then the picture faded as they sped down the lake and Helen gave herself up to complete enjoyment of the boat trip.

There were few signs along the shore of the storm. After veering away from Rolfe it had evidently gone directly down the lake until it reached the summer resorts.

In less than ten minutes Rolfe had disappeared and the far end of the lake was in view. Preston slowed the *Liberty* somewhat and swung across the lake to the left toward Crescent Beach, the new resort which several wealthy men from the state capital were promoting.

They slid around a rocky promontory and into view of the resort. Boathouses dipped crazily into the water and the large bath-house, the most modern on the lake, had been crushed while the toboggan slide had been flipped upside down by the capricious wind.

The big pier had collapsed and Preston nosed the *Liberty* carefully in-shore until the bow grated on the fresh, clean sand of the beach.

Kirk Foster, the young manager of the resort, was directing a crew of men who were cleaning up the debris. **[87]**

The boatman introduced Helen to the manager and he willingly gave her all the details about the damage. The large, new hotel had escaped unharmed and the private cottages, some of which were nicer than the homes in Rolfe, had suffered only minor damage.

“The damage to the bathhouse, about $35,000, was the heaviest,” said the manager, “but don’t forget to say in your story that we’ll have things fixed up in about two weeks, and everything is insured.”

“I won’t,” promised Helen, “and when you have any news be sure and let me know.”

“We cater to a pretty ritzy crowd,” replied the manager, “and we ought to have some famous people here during the summer. I’ll tip you off whenever I think there is a likely story.”

Jim Preston left the mail for the resort and they returned to the Liberty, backed out carefully, and headed across the lake for Sandy Point, a resort which had been on the lake for more years than Helen could remember.

Sandy Point was popular with the townspeople and farmers and was known for its wonderful bathing beach. Lake Dubar was shallow there and it was safe for almost anyone to enjoy the bathing at Sandy Point. **[88]**

The old resort was not nearly as pretentious as Crescent Beach for its bathhouses, cottages and hotel were weather beaten and vine-covered. Art Provost, the manager, was waiting for the morning mail when the Liberty churned up to the pier.

“Storm missed you,” said the boatman.

“And right glad I am that it did,” replied Provost. “I thought we were goners when I saw it coming down the lake but it swung over east and took its spite out on Crescent Beach. Been over there

yet?”

“Stopped on the way down,” replied Jim Preston. “They suffered a good bit of damage but will have it cleaned up in a couple or three days.”

“Glad to hear that,” said Provost, “that young manager, Foster, is a fine fellow.”

Helen inquired for news about the resort and was told that it would be another week, about the first of June, before the season would be under way.

They left Sandy Point and headed up the lake, this time at a leisurely twenty miles an hour. Helen enjoyed every minute of the trip, drinking in the quiet beauty of the lake, its peaceful hills and the charm of the farms with their cattle browsing contentedly in the pastures. **[89]**

It was noon when they docked at Rolfe and Helen, after thanking the boatman, went home instead of returning to the office.

Tom had come from school and lunch was on the table. Helen told her brother of the sale of the quarter page ad for the paper and the 500 bills.

“That’s fine,” said Tom, “but you must have looked on the wrong page in the cost book.”

“Didn’t I ask enough?”

“You were short about fifty cents,” grinned Tom, “but we’ll make a profit on the job, especially since you got him to run it as an ad in the paper.”

“What are you going to do this afternoon?” Mrs. Blair asked Tom.

“I’ll make the rounds of the stores and see what business I can line up for the paper,” said the business manager of the *Herald*. “Then there are a couple of jobs of letterheads I’ll have to get out of the way and by the time I get them printed the metal in the Linotype will be hot and I can set up Helen’s editorials and whatever other copy she got ready this morning.”

“The storm story runs six pages,” said Helen, “and when I add a few paragraphs about the summer resorts, it will take another page. Is it too long?” **[90]**

“Not if it is well written.”

“You’ll have to judge that for yourself.”

“I walked home with Marg Stevens,” said Tom, “and she said to tell you the sophomore picnic planned for this afternoon has been postponed until Friday. A lot of the boys from the country have to go home early and help clean up the storm damage.”

“Suits me just as well,” said Helen, “for we’ll have the paper off the press Thursday and I’ll be ready for a picnic Friday.”

Tom went to the office after lunch and Helen walked to school with Margaret. Just before the assembly was called to order, one of the teachers came down to Helen’s desk and told her she was wanted in the superintendent’s office. When Helen reached the office she found

Superintendent Fowler and Mr. King, the state superintendent of schools, waiting for her. The state superintendent greeted her cordially and told Superintendent Fowler how Helen had met him at the train.

"I promised to give her a story about my visit," he explained, "and I thought this would be a good time." **[91]**

Superintendent Fowler nodded his agreement and the state school leader continued.

"I hope you'll consider it good news," he told Helen, "when I say that the Rolfe school has been judged the finest in the state for towns under one thousand inhabitants."

"It certainly is news," said Helen. "Mr. Fowler has worked hard in the two years he has been here and the *Herald* will be glad to have this story."

"I thought you would," said Mr. King, and he told Helen in detail of the improvement which had been made in the local school in the last two years and how much attention it was attracting throughout the state.

"You really ought to have a school page in the local paper," he told Helen in concluding.

"Perhaps we will next fall," replied the young editor of the *Herald*. "By that time Tom and I should be veterans in the newspaper game and able to add another page of news to the *Herald*."

"We'll talk it over next August when I come back to get things in shape for the opening of the fall term," said Superintendent Fowler. "I'm heartily in favor of one if Tom and Helen can spare the time and the space it will require." **[92]**

Helen returned to the assembly with the handful of notes she had jotted down while Mr. King talked. Her American History class had gone to its classroom and she picked up her textbook and walked down the assembly, inquiring eyes following her, wondering why she had been called into the superintendent's office. They'd have to read the *Herald* to find out that story.

[93]

CHAPTER VII
The First Issue

At the close of school Helen met Margaret Stevens in the hall outside the assembly room.

"What is my first assignment going to be?" asked Helen's reporting staff.

"I think it would be a good idea if you went to the teachers and got all the school news," Helen suggested. "It is almost the end of the year and most of the classes are planning parties and programs of various kinds."

"I'll do it right away," promised Margaret and she hurried off on her first newspaper assignment.

Helen smiled at her friend's enthusiasm and she hoped that it wouldn't wear off for Margaret was clever, knew a great many people and could be a real help if she made up her mind to gather news. In return, all Helen could offer would be the experience and the closer friendship which their constant association would mean.

The young editor of the *Herald* walked down the street alone, for most of the students had left the building while she had been talking with Margaret.

When she reached the *Herald* office she heard the steady hum of the electric motor of the Linotype and the clack of its long arm as Tom sent the lines of matrices into the mould to come out in the form of shiny, hot lead slugs—new type for their first edition of the *Herald*. **[94]**

Tom rose from his chair before the Linotype keyboard and came into the editorial office.

"That's a fine story on the storm," he told Helen. "It's so interesting I can't make any time getting it into type; keep stopping to read your descriptions again."

"I've got another good story," Helen replied, and she told her brother all about the visit of the state superintendent of schools and of his praise for the local school.

"What a front page we'll have to send to Dad," chuckled Tom. "And to match your good news stories, I made the rounds of the stores the first thing this afternoon and got the ads lined up. I couldn't get the copy for all of them but I know just how much space each store will take. We'll have a 'pay dirt' issue this week with a little more than 250 inches of ads and at 25 cents a column inch that means better than $60 worth of business. Not bad for a starter, eh?"

"Won't that crowd the inside pages?" **[95]**

"A little," Tom conceded, "but we've got to make every cent we can. I've been doing a little figuring on our expenses and how much business we ought to have. We think of the *Herald* as an eight page paper. That's true, but four of the pages are printed at Cranston by the Globe Printing Company with our serial story, pictures of news of the world, fashion and menu suggestions and world news in general on them. We seldom if ever put ads on our front page and that leaves only three pages for which we can sell ads and on which we must earn enough to pay expenses, keep the family going and build up a surplus to take care of Dad when he needs more money. Those three six column pages have 360 column inches, 120 to each page, and at our rate of 25 cents an inch for advertising we've got to sell a lot to make the grade."

"I hadn't figured it out like that," Helen admitted, "but of course you're right. Can't we expand the paper some way to get more business? Only this morning the farmer that came in to see about the sale bills said he wished we would run a farm page and the school superintendent would like to have a school page next fall."

"The farm page," Tom said, "would undoubtedly bring us more business and the first time I have **[96]**

a half day to spare I'll take the old car and go down to Gladbrook and see the county agent.

"Maybe I can get some job work from the offices at the courthouse," he added hopefully.

The telephone rang and Helen answered the call. It was from a woman who had out-of-town guests and the young editor jotted the names down on a pad of paper. That done she turned to her typewriter and wrote the item, for with her half days to work she had to write her stories as soon as she had them.

Margaret bounced in with a handful of notes.

"I've got half a dozen school stories," she exclaimed. "Almost every teacher had something for me and they're anxious to see their school news in the paper."

"I thought they would be," Helen smiled. "Can you run a typewriter?"

"I'm a total stranger," Margaret confessed. "I'll do a lot better if I scribble my stories in longhand, if Tom thinks he can read my scrawls."

"I'll try," came the reply from the composing room, "but I absolutely refuse to stand on my head to do it."

"They're not that bad," laughed Margaret, "and I'll try to do especially well for you." **[97]**

Helen provided her first assistant with copypaper and Margaret sat down at the desk to write her stories. The editor of the *Herald* then devoted her attention to writing up the notes she had taken in her talk with the state superintendent of schools. It was a story that she found slow to write for she wanted no mistakes in it.

The afternoon was melting in a soft May twilight when Tom snapped the switch on the Linotype and came into the editorial office.

"Almost six o'clock," he said, "and time for us to head for home and supper."

Margaret, who had been at the desk writing for more than an hour, straightened her cramped back.

"Ouch!" she exclaimed. "I never thought reporting could be such work and yet so much fun. I'm getting the biggest thrill out of my stories."

"That's about all the pay you will get," grinned Tom.

They closed the office and started home together. They had hardly gone a block when Helen stopped suddenly.

"Give me the office key, Tom," she said. "I started a letter to Dad this morning and it got sidetracked when someone came in. I'm going back and get it. I can finish it at home and mail it on the seven-fifteen when I come down to meet the train." **[98]**

"I'll get it for you," said Tom and started on the run for the office. He got her half-finished letter,

and rejoined Helen and Margaret, who had walked slowly.

“I’ll add a few lines to your letter,” Tom said. “Dad will be glad to know we’ve lined up a lot of ads for our first issue.”

Doctor Stevens came out of his office and joined them in their walk home.

“How are all the storm victims?” asked Helen.

“Getting along fine,” said the doctor. “I can’t understand why there weren’t more serious injuries. The storm was terrific.”

“Perhaps it is because most of them heard it coming and sought shelter in the strongest buildings or took refuge in cellars,” suggested Tom.

“I suppose that’s the explanation.”

“I’ll finish my school stories tomorrow afternoon,” promised Margaret as she turned toward her home.

[99]

The twilight hour was the one that Helen liked best of all the busy hours of her day. From the porch she could look down at the long, deep-blue stretch of water that was Lake Dubar while a liquid-gold sun settled into the western hills. Purple shadows in the little valleys bordering the lake, lights gleaming from farm house windows on far away hills, the mellow chime of a freight train whistling for a crossing and over all a pervading calmness that overcame any feeling of fatigue and brought only a feeling of rest and quiet to Helen. It was hard to believe that a little more than 24 hours before this peaceful scene had been threatened with total destruction by the fury of the elements.

Helen’s mother called and the *Herald* editor went into the dining room. Tom, his hands scrubbed clean of printer’s ink, was at the table when Helen took her place.

Mrs. Blair bowed her head in silent prayer and Tom and Helen did likewise.

“Didn’t I see you working in the garden this morning when I went down the lake with Jim Preston?” Helen asked her mother.

“Probably. I’m planning a larger garden than ever. We can cut down on our grocery bills if we raise more things at home.”

[100]

“Don’t try to do too much,” Tom warned, “for we’re depending on you as the boss of this outfit now. I’ll help you with the garden every chance I get.”

“I know you will,” his mother replied, “but I thoroughly enjoy working outdoors. If you’ll take care of the potato patch, I’ll be able to do the rest and still find time to write a few social items for the paper.”

“Did you get any today?” Helen asked.

“Nearly half a dozen. The Methodist Ladies Aid is planning a spring festival, an afternoon of quilting and a chicken dinner in the evening with everyone invited.”

“And what a feed they put out,” added Tom. “I’ll have to see their officers and get an ad for the paper.”

Supper over and the dishes washed, dried and put away, Helen turned her attention to finishing the letter to her father. Tom also sat down to write a note and when they had finished Mrs. Blair put their letters in the envelope with her own, sealed it and gave it to Helen.

Margaret Stevens stuck her head in the door.

“Going up to school for the sophomore-junior debate?” she asked.

“I’ve got to meet the seven-fifteen first,” Helen replied. “I’ll meet you at school about seven-thirty.” **[101]**

“Wait a minute, Marg,” said Tom. “I guess I’ll go along and see just how badly the sophomores are beaten. Of course you know you kids haven’t got a chance.”

“Be careful, Tom,” Helen warned. “Margaret is captain of our debate team.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” chuckled Tom. “No offense.”

“It will be an offense, though,” smiled Margaret, “and the juniors will be on the receiving end of our verbal attack.”

“Look out for a counter attack,” Tom grinned.

“We’ll be home early, mother,” said Helen as they left the house.

“I hope the sophomores win,” her mother said. “Tom and his juniors are too sure of themselves.”

The seven-fifteen coughed its way into town, showering the few people on the platform with cinders. Helen ran to the mail car and dropped her letter into the mail slot.

Mr. King, the state superintendent of instruction, was the only passenger leaving but there were several Rolfe people getting off the train. She got their names and stopped to talk a minute or two with the agent.

“I’ll have some news for next week’s paper,” he told her, but refused to say another word about the promised story and Helen went on to the high school. **[102]**

The assembly was well filled with students and a scattering of parents whose children were taking part in the inter-class debate. The senior debaters had already eliminated the freshmen and the winner of the sophomore-junior debate would meet the seniors for the championship of the school.

Helen looked around for a seat and was surprised to see her mother beside Mrs. Stevens.

“I didn’t know you planned to come,” Helen said.

“I didn’t,” smiled her mother, “but just after you left Mrs. Stevens ran over and I decided to come with her.”

The debate was on the question of whether the state should adopt a paving program which would reach every county. The sophomores supported the affirmative and the juniors the negative. The question was of vital interest for it was to come to a vote in July and, if approved, Rolfe would get a place on the scenic highway which would run along the western border of the state, through the beautiful lake country. It would mean an increased tourist trade and more business for Rolfe.

Margaret had marshalled her facts into impressive arguments and the weight of the evidence was with her team but the juniors threw up a smoke screen of ridicule to hide their weaker facts and Helen felt her heart sinking as the debate progressed. Margaret made the final rebuttal for the sophomores and gave a masterful argument in favor of the paved road program but the last junior speaker came back with a few humorous remarks that could easily confuse the judges into mistaking brilliant humor for facts. **[103]**

The debate closed and the judges handed their slips with their decisions to Superintendent Fowler. Every eye in the assembly watched the superintendent as he unfolded the slips and jotted down the results. He stood up behind his desk.

“The judges vote two to one in favor of the sophomores,” he announced.

There was a burst of applause and students and parents crowded around the victorious team to congratulate it. When it was all over, Mrs. Blair, Mrs. Stevens, Margaret, Helen and Tom started home together.

“And we didn’t have a chance,” Margaret chided Tom. **[104]**

“I still think we have the best team,” insisted Tom. “The judges got a little confused.”

“If they were confused, Tom,” his mother said, “it was by the juniors. Your team didn’t have the facts; they resorted to humor and ridicule. I think it is a fine victory for the sophomores.”

Tuesday morning Helen looked over the stories Margaret had written the afternoon before and wrote a long story about the sophomore-junior debate, stressing the arguments in favor of the paving program which the sophomores had brought out. She was thoroughly in agreement and meant to devote space in the *Herald*, both editorially and from a news standpoint, to furthering the passage of the good roads program.

The farmer who had called the day before came in with his copy for the ad and sale bills.

“I’ve talked over the farm page idea with my brother,” Helen told him, “and we’ll get one started just as soon as he can find the time to go to Gladbrook and see the county agent.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” replied the farmer, “and I’ll pass the word around to our neighbors. Also, if you had a column of news each week from the courthouse it would help your paper. A lot of farmers take one of the Gladbrook papers just **[105]**

for that reason. They want courthouse news and can't get it in the *Herald*."

"We'll see about that, too," promised Helen.

She had almost forgotten that she was to write to the state bureau of the Associated Press and apply for the job as correspondent for Rolfe and the nearby vicinity. She wrote one letter, was dissatisfied, tore it up and wrote a second and then a third before she was ready to mail it. As Tom had said, it would be one way of increasing their income and at the same time might help her to secure a job later.

Margaret finished her school stories after school that afternoon and Helen visited all of the stores down town in search of personals. Several fishermen had been fined for illegal fishing and she got that story from the justice of the peace. She called on the ministers and got their church notices.

Wednesday was their big day and Helen worked hard all morning writing her personals. The main news stories about the storm, the visit of the state superintendent and the high school debate were already in type and Tom had finished setting most of the ads.

When Helen came down after school Tom called her into the composing room. He had the ads for the two inside pages placed in the forms. One of the pages they devoted to the editorials and the other they filled with personal items about the comings and goings of local people. **[106]**

The ads were placed well in the pages and when Tom finished putting in the type he stood back and looked at his handiwork.

"I call that mighty good makeup," he said. "Pyramiding the ads on the left side of the page makes them look better and then we always have news on the right-hand side."

Helen agreed that the pages were well made up and Tom locked the type into the steel forms, picked up one of the pages and carried it to the press. The other page was put on and locked into place.

Tom washed his hands and climbed up to take his place on the press. The paper for that issue of the *Herald* had come down from Cranston the day before with four pages, two and three and six and seven already printed. Pages four and five, filled with local news and ads, were on the press. Tom would get them printed in the next two hours and on Thursday afternoon would make up and print page one and page eight.

He smoothed the stack of paper on the feeding board, put a little glycerine on his fingers so he could pick up each sheet and feed it into the press, and then threw on the switch. The motor hummed. Tom fed one sheet into the press and pushed in the clutch. The press shook itself out of its week-long slumber, groaned in protest at the thought of printing another week's issue, but at the continued urging of the powerful motor, clanked into motion. **[107]**

"See how the ink looks," Tom called and Helen seized the first few papers. Her brother stopped the press and climbed down to look over the

pages for possible corrections.

“Looks all right,” he conceded as he scanned the cleanly printed page.

“Wonder how Dad will like our new editorial head and the three column box head I set for your personals?”

“He’ll like them,” Helen said. “The only reason he didn’t do things like that was because he didn’t have the strength.”

Tom nodded, wiped a tear from his eyes, and went back to feeding the press. Helen kept the papers stacked neatly as they came out and it was nearly six o’clock before Tom finished the first run.

“We’ll go home and get something to eat,” he said, “and then come back. I’ve got some more copy to set on the Linotype and you write your last minute stories. Maybe we’ll have time to make up part of the front page before we go home tonight. I’d like to have you here and we’ll write the heads together and see how they look.” **[108]**

“Are you going to head all of the front page stories?” asked Helen.

“If I have time,” Tom replied. “It improves the looks of the paper; makes it look newsy and alive.”

Supper was waiting for them when they reached home and Tom handed his mother a copy of the two inside pages they had just printed.

“It looks fine,” enthused Mrs. Blair, “and the ads are so well arranged and attractive. Tom, you’ve certainly worked hard, and, Helen, I don’t see where you got so many personals.”

“We’re going to use your column of social news on page eight,” Tom went on. “It’s on the last run and in that way we can be sure of getting in all of your news.”

“I have three more items,” said his mother. “They’re all written and ready to be set up.”

“We’re going back for a while after supper,” said Helen, “but I don’t think it will take us over a couple of hours to finish, do you, Tom?” **[109]**

“About nine-thirty,” replied Tom, who was devoting himself whole-heartedly to a large baked potato.

When they returned to the office Helen finished the last of her items in half an hour. By eight-thirty Tom had all of the news in type and had made the necessary corrections from the proofs which Helen had read.

“We need a head for the storm story,” he said. “A three line, three column 30 point one ought to be about right. You jot one down on a sheet of paper and I’ll try and make it fit.”

Helen worked several minutes on a headline. “This is the best I can do,” she said:

“TORNADO CAUSES $150,000 DAMAGE
NEAR ROLFE SUNDAY; MISSES TOWN
BUT STRIKES RESORT ALONG LAKE”

"Sounds fine," Tom said. "Now I'll see how it fits." He set up the headline and Helen wrote a two column one for the story of the Rolfe school being the best for its size in the state.

Tom put the headlines on the front page and placed the stories under them. Shorter stories, some of them written by Margaret, filled up the page and they turned their attention to page eight, the last one to be made up. [110]

Their mother's social items led the page, followed by the church notices and the last of Helen's personals.

"We've got about ten inches too much type," said Tom. "See if some of the personals can't be left out and run next week."

Helen culled out six items that could be left out and Tom finished making up the page. Tomorrow he would print the last two pages and Helen would assemble the papers and fold them. Their first issue of the *Herald* was ready for the press.

[111]

CHAPTER VIII
Mystery in the Night

Helen and Tom hurried home from school Thursday noon, ate a hasty lunch and then went on to the *Herald* office to finish their task of putting out their first issue of the paper.

Helen stopped at the postoffice for the mail and Tom went on to unlock the office, put the pages on the press and start printing the last run.

In the mail Helen found a letter postmarked Rubio, Arizona, and in her Father's familiar handwriting. She ran into the *Herald* office and on into the composing room where Tom was locking the last page on the old flat-bed press.

"Tom," she cried, "here's a letter from Dad!"

"Open it," he replied. "Let's see what he has to say."

Helen was about to tear open the envelope when she paused.

"No," she decided. "Mother ought to be the one to read it first. I'll call her and tell her it's here. She'll want to come down and get it."

"You're right," agreed Tom as he climbed up on the press. He turned on the motor and threw in the clutch. The old machine clanked back and forth, gathering momentum for the final run of the week. [112]

Helen eagerly scanned the front page as it came off the press. It was heavy with fresh ink but she thrilled at the makeup on page one. There were her stories, the one about the tornado and the other about the high standing of the local school. Tom's heads looked fine. The paper was bright and newsy—easy to read. She hoped her Dad would be pleased.

With the final run on the press it was Helen's task to assemble and fold the papers. She donned a heavy apron, piled the papers on one of the makeup tables and placed a chair beside her. With arms moving methodically, she started to work, folding the papers and sliding them off the table onto the chair.

Tom had just got the press running smoothly when there was a grinding crash followed by the groaning of the electric motor.

Helen turned quickly. Something might have happened to Tom. He might have slipped off his stool and fallen into the machinery of the press.

But Tom was all right. He reached for the switch and shut off the power.

"What happened?" gasped Helen, her face still white from the shock. **[113]**

"Breakdown," grunted Tom disgustedly. "This antique has been ready for the junk pile for years but Dad never felt he could afford to get a new one or even a good second-hand one."

"What will we do?" asked Helen anxiously. "We've got to get the paper out."

"I'll run down to the garage and get Milt Pearsall to come over. He's a fine mechanic and Dad has called on him before when things have gone wrong with the press."

Tom hastened out and Helen resumed her task of folding the few papers which had been printed before the breakdown. Everything had been going so smoothly until this trouble. Now they might be delayed hours if the trouble was anything serious.

She heard someone call from the office. It was her mother and she hastened out of the composing room.

"Here's the letter," she said, pulling it out of a pocket in her dress. "We knew you'd be anxious to hear."

"Why didn't you open it and then telephone me?" her mother asked.

"We could have done that," Helen admitted, "but we thought you'd like to be the first to open and read it." **[114]**

"You're so thoughtful," murmured her mother. With hands that trembled in spite of her effort to be calm, she opened the letter and unfolded the single page it contained. Helen waited, tense, until her mother had finished.

"How's Dad?" she asked.

"His letter is very cheerful," replied Mrs. Blair, handing it to Helen. "Naturally he is tired but he says the climate is invigorating and he expects to feel better soon."

"Of course he will," agreed Helen.

"Where's Tom?"

"The press broke down and he went to the garage to get Milt Pearsall."

"I hope it's nothing serious," said her mother.

“Is there something I can do?”

“If you’ve got the time to spare, I’d like to have you look over our first issue. Here’s a copy.”

Helen’s mother scanned the paper with keen, critical eyes.

“It looks wonderful to me,” she exclaimed. “I like the heads on the front page and you’ve so many good stories. Tom did splendidly on the ads. How proud your father will be when he gets a copy.” **[115]**

“I thought perhaps you’d like to write his address on a wrapper and we’ll put it in the mail tonight when the other papers go out,” said Helen.

Mrs. Blair nodded and addressed the wrapper Helen supplied.

“If you’re sure there’s nothing I can do at the office,” she said, “I’ll go on to the kensington at Mrs. Henderson’s.”

“Don’t forget to pick up all the news you can at the party,” cautioned Helen.

“I won’t,” promised her mother.

Helen had just finished folding the papers when Tom returned with Milt Pearsall.

The mechanic was a large, heavy-set man with a mop of unruly hair, eyes that twinkled a merry blue, and lips that constantly smiled.

“Hello, Editor,” he boomed. “Press broke again, Tom says. Huh, expected it to happen most anytime. Well, let’s see what’s the matter.”

He eased his bulk down under the press, dug into his tool kit for a flashlight and wormed his way into the machinery.

“Get me the long wrench,” he directed Tom.

The request complied with, there followed a number of thumps and whacks of steel against steel, a groan as Pearsall bumped his head in the crowded quarters, and finally a grunt of satisfaction. **[116]**

The mechanic crawled from under the press, a smudge of ink across his forehead. He wiped his hands thoughtfully.

“Some day,” he ventured, “that old press is going to fall apart and I won’t be able to tease it back again.”

“What was the trouble?” asked Tom.

“Cross bar slipped out of place and dropped down so it caught and held the bed of the press from moving. Good thing you shut off the power or you might have snapped that rod. Then we’d have been out of luck until I could have made a new one.”

“How much will it be?” Tom asked.

The big mechanic grinned.

“Oh, that’s all right, Tom,” he chuckled. “Just forget to send me a bill for my subscription. That’s the way your Dad and I did.”

“Thanks a lot for helping us out,” said Tom, “and I’ll see that you don’t get a subscription dun.”

Tom climbed back to his place on the press, turned on the power and eased the clutch in gently. Helen watched anxiously, afraid that they might have another breakdown but the old machine clanked along steadily and she picked up the mounting pile of papers and returned to her task of folding. **[117]**

Paper after paper she assembled, folded and slid onto the pile on the chair. When the chair overflowed with papers she stopped and carried them into the editorial office and piled them on the floor.

Tom finished his press run and went into the editorial office to get out their old hand mailer and start running the papers through to stamp the names and addresses on each one.

After an hour of steady folding Helen’s arms ached so severely she stopped working and went into the editorial office.

“Getting tired?” Tom asked.

She nodded.

“You run the mailer for a while and I’ll fold papers,” said her brother. “That will give you a rest.”

Helen agreed and they switched work. She clicked the papers through the mailer at a steady pace.

“Papers ready?” called the postmaster from his office in the front half of the *Herald* building. **[118]**

“The city list is stamped and ready,” replied Helen. “I’ll bring them in right away.”

“Never mind,” said Mr. Hughes, “I’ll save you a trip.”

“Matter of fact,” continued the postmaster when he entered the office, “I wanted to see what kind of an issue you two kids got out.”

Helen handed him an unstamped paper and he sat down in the one vacant chair. She valued the old postmaster’s friendship highly and awaited his comment with unusual interest.

“One of the best issues of the *Herald* I’ve ever seen,” he enthused when he had finished looking over the paper. “Your stories have got all your Dad’s ‘get up and go’ and these headlines are something new for the *Herald*. Believe I like ’em.”

“Some people may not,” said Helen, “so we’ll appreciate all of the boosting you do.”

“I’ll do plenty,” he chuckled as he picked up an armful of papers and returned to the postoffice.

Margaret Stevens bustled in after school in time to help carry the last of the papers to the postoffice and she insisted on sweeping out the editorial office.

“You’re just ‘white’ tired,” she scolded Helen. “Sit down and I’ll swing this broom a few times.” **[119]**

“I am a little tired,” admitted Helen. “How about

you, Tom?”

“Me for bed just as soon as I get home and have something to eat,” agreed her brother. “Guess we were all worked up and nervous over our first issue.”

“You were a real help, Margaret,” said Helen, “and I hope you’ll like reporting well enough to stick with us.”

“I’m crazy about it,” replied Margaret, wielding the broom with new vigor.

Conversation among the sophomores the next morning at school was devoted solely to the class picnic in the afternoon. The refreshment committee had been busy and each member of the class was to furnish one thing. Helen was to bring pickles and Margaret’s mother was baking a large chocolate cake.

The class was dismissed at noon for the rest of the day, to meet again at one o’clock at Jim Preston’s boat landing for the trip down the lake to the picnic grounds on Linder’s farm.

There were 18 in the sophomore class and it was necessary for the boatman to make two trips with the *Liberty* to transport them to the picnic grounds. Helen and Margaret were in the first boat load and were the first ones out on the sandy beach at Linder’s. The rambling old farmhouse, famous for its home cooked chicken dinners, set back several hundred feet from the lake shore. To the left of the farm was a dense grove of maples. The picnic was to be along the shore just in front of the maples where there was ample shade to protect the group from the warm rays of the sun. **[120]**

Miss Carver, the class advisor, rented two rowboats at Linder’s, and the class took turns enjoying cruises along the shore, hunting unusual rocks and shells for their collection at school.

The day previous Miss Carver and another teacher had come down the lake and made arrangements for a treasure hunt. The first clue was to be revealed at three o’clock and the class, divided into two groups, was to compete to see which group could find the hidden treasure. The first clue took them to the Linder farmyard, the second through the maples to an old sugarhouse, and the third brought them out of the timber and along a meadow where placid dairy cattle looked at them with wondering eyes. The fourth clue was found along the stream which cut through the meadow and Helen, leading one group, turned back toward the lake. A breeze was freshening out of the west and the sun dropped rapidly toward the shadows which were enfolding the hills.

The final clue took them back to their picnic ground and they arrived just ahead of Margaret and her followers to claim the prize, a two pound box of chocolates. **[121]**

Miss Carver had laid out the baskets and hampers of food and the girls, helped by the boys in their clumsy way, started serving the supper.

One of the boys built a bonfire and with the

coming of twilight and the cooling of the air its warmth felt good. The flames chased the shadows back toward the timber and sent dancing reflections out on the ruffled waters of Lake Dubar.

The afternoon in the open had whetted their appetites and they enjoyed their meal to the fullest. Thick, spicy sandwiches disappeared as if by magic, pickles followed in quick order and the mounds of potato salad melted away.

They stopped for a second wind before attacking the cakes and cookies but when those fortresses of food had been conquered the boys cut and sharpened sticks and the girls opened a large sack of marshmallows.

More wood was heaped on the fire and they gathered around the flames to toast the soft, white cubes. **[122]**

With the wind whispering through the trees and the steady lap, lap, lap of the waves on the shore, it was the hour for stories and they settled back from the fire to listen to Miss Carver, whose reputation as a story teller was unexcelled.

“It was a night like this,” she started, “and a class something like this one was on a picnic. After supper they sat down at the fire to tell ghost stories, each one trying to outdo the other in the horror of the things they told.”

From somewhere through the night came a long drawn out cry rising from a soft note to a high crescendo that sent shivers running up and down the back of everyone at the fireside.

Helen laughed.

“It’s only the whistle of a freight train,” she assured the others, but they all moved closer to the fire.

“While they told stories,” went on Miss Carver, “the blackness of the night increased, the stars faded and over all there was a canopy of such darkness as had never been seen before. The wind moaned dismally like a lost soul and the waters of the lake, white-capped by the breeze, chattered against the rocky beach. The last ghost story was being told by one of the boys. He told how people disappeared as if by magic, leaving no trace behind them, uttering no sound. Some of the other stories had been surprising, but this one gave the class the creeps and everyone turned to see if the others were there.” **[123]**

Involuntarily Helen reached out to clasp Margaret’s hand and when she failed to find it, turned to the spot where Margaret had been sitting beside her a few minutes before.

Margaret had disappeared!

[124]

CHAPTER IX
Rescue on Lake Dubar

Helen stared hard at the place where her friend should have been. Had the magic of Miss Carver's story been so strong that she was imagining things? She rubbed her eyes and looked again. There was no mistake. Margaret had disappeared!

Helen's cry caught the attention of the other members of the class and Miss Carver stopped her story.

"What's the matter, Helen?" the teacher asked.

"Look," cried Helen dazedly, pointing to the spot where Margaret had been sitting, "Margaret's gone!"

Miss Carver's eyes widened and she gave a little shudder. Then she smiled to reassure Helen and the other members of the class.

"Probably Margaret slipped away and is hiding just to add a thrill to my ghost story. I'll call her."

"Margaret, oh, Margaret!" The teacher's voice rang through the night. She cupped her hands and called again when there was no response to her first one. Once more she called but still there was no answer from the massed maples behind them or the dark waters of the lake. **[125]**

"This is more than a joke," muttered Ned Burns, the class president. "We'd better get out and have a look around."

He stepped toward the fire, threw on an armful of fresh, dry sticks, and the flames leaped higher, throwing their reflection further into the night.

"We'll take a look into the woods," he told Miss Carver, "and you and the girls hunt along the lake shore. Margaret might have fallen and hurt herself."

Miss Carver agreed and the girls gathered around her. There was a queer tightness in Helen's throat and a tugging at her heart that unnerved her—a vague, pressing fear that something was decidedly wrong with Margaret.

The boys disappeared into the shadows of the timber and the girls turned toward the lake shore.

They had just started their search when Miss Carver made an important discovery.

"Girls," she cried, "One of the rowboats we rented this afternoon is missing!"

Helen ran toward the spot, the other girls crowding around her. They could make out the marks of the boat's keel in the sand and a girl's footprints. **[126]**

"Those prints were made by Margaret's shoes," said Helen. "You can see the marks of the heel plates she has on her oxfords."

"We'll call the boys," said Miss Carver, and Helen thought she detected a real note of alarm in the teacher's voice although Miss Carver was making every possible effort to appear calm.

When the boys arrived, Miss Carver told them of

their discovery and Ned Burns took charge of the situation.

"We'll get in the other rowboat," he said, "and start looking for Margaret. In the meantime, someone must go up to Linder's farmhouse and telephone town. Margaret's father ought to know she's out on the lake in the boat. Also call Jim Preston and if he hasn't started down with the *Liberty*, have him come at once."

"I'll go to the farm," volunteered Helen.

"O. K.," nodded Ned as he selected two other boys to accompany him in the rowboat. They pushed off the sandy beach, dropped the oars in the locks, and splashed away into the night.

"Don't you want someone to go to the farmhouse with you?" Miss Carver asked Helen.

But Helen shook her head and ran up the beach. **[127]** She didn't want anyone with her; she wanted to be alone. The other girls didn't realize the seriousness of the situation. She could understand what Margaret had done. Realizing that Miss Carver would tell them a first rate thriller of a ghost story, Margaret had decided to add an extra thrill by disappearing for a few minutes. But something had gone wrong and she hadn't been able to get back.

Helen paused and looked over the black, mysterious waters of Lake Dubar. What secret were they keeping from her? Thoughts of what might have happened to Margaret brought the queer, choky sobs again and she ran on toward Linder's where the welcome glow of light showed through the windows of the farmhouse.

Old Mr. Linder came to the door in answer to Helen's quick, insistent knocks.

"What's the matter, young Lady?" he asked, peering at her through the mellow radiance of the kerosene lamp which he held in one hand.

"I'm Helen Blair," she explained, "and one of my classmates has disappeared from our picnic party down the beach. One of the boats we rented from you is missing and we're sure Margaret is adrift on the lake and unable to get back. I'd like to use your telephone to let her father know and to call Jim Preston."

"Why, certainly," said Mr. Linder, "I don't **[128]** wonder at your hurry. Come right in and use the phone. Who did you say the girl was?"

"Margaret Stevens," Helen replied.

"Must be Doctor Stevens' daughter," said the farmer.

"She is," Helen replied, as she reached the telephone in the hallway.

While Helen was ringing for the operator at Rolfe, Mr. Linder stuck his head in the living room.

"Mother," he said, "Doctor Stevens' daughter is adrift somewhere on the lake in one of our boats. I'm going down and see if I can help find her."

Mrs. Linder came into the hall and Helen heard

her husband telling her what had happened. Then the Rolfe operator answered and Helen gave her the number of Doctor Stevens' office.

The doctor answered almost instantly and Helen, phrasing her sentences as tactfully as possible so as not to unduly alarm the doctor, told him what had happened.

"Sounds just like Margaret," he snorted. "I'll be right down. Now don't worry too much, Helen," he added. **[129]**

"I won't, Doctor Stevens," promised Helen with a shaky attempt at cheerfulness.

Then she called Jim Preston's home and learned that he had left fifteen minutes before and should be almost down to Linder's.

"We'll go down to the landing and wait for Jim," said Mr. Linder as he lighted a lantern he had brought from the kitchen.

"Everything will come out all right," Mrs. Linder assured Helen.

The farmer led the way down to the landing. The wind was freshening rapidly and Helen saw Mr. Linder anxiously watching the white caps which were pounding against the sandy beach.

Down the beach their picnic campfire was a red glow and Helen could see Miss Hughes and the girls huddled around it. The boys who had not accompanied Ned Burns were walking up and down along the shore.

She turned and looked up the lake. Two lights, one red and one green, the markers of the *Liberty*, were coming down the lake.

"Jim Preston will be here in another minute," said Mr. Linder, "and with the searchlight he's got on the *Liberty* it won't take us long to find Doctor Stevens' daughter." **[130]**

Helen nodded miserably as the *Liberty* slowed down and swung its nose toward the Linder pier. There was the grinding of the reverse gear as Jim Preston checked the speed of his boat and left it drift against the pier.

"Don't shut it off, Jim," cried the farmer. "Doc Stevens' daughter is adrift in the lake in one of my rowboats. We've got to go out and look for her."

They climbed into the boat and Jim Preston backed the *Liberty* away from the pier.

"How did it happen?" he asked Helen. She told him briefly and he shook his head, as though to say, "too bad, it's getting to be a nasty night on the lake."

The boatman opened the throttle, the motor roared its response and the *Liberty* leaped ahead and down the lake. They ran parallel to the shore until they were opposite the picnic ground. There Jim Preston slowed down, got the direction of the wind, and turned the nose of the *Liberty* toward the open and now wind-tossed lake. He snapped on the switch and a crackling, blue beam of light cut a path ahead of the boat.

"Keep the searchlight moving," he directed the **[131]**

farmer, who stood up in the *Liberty*, his hands on the handles of the big, nickel lamp.

The boatman held the *Liberty* at about one third speed and they moved almost directly across the lake while Mr. Linder kept the searchlight swinging in an arc to cover the largest possible area.

A third of the way across they sighted a boat far to their right and Jim Preston swung the nose of the *Liberty* around sharply and opened the throttle. They sliced through the white caps at a pace that drenched them with the flying spray but they were too intent on reaching the distant boat to stop and put up the spray boards.

Helen's keen eyes were the first to identify the boat.

"It's the boys," she cried. "They're beckoning us on."

Jim Preston checked the *Liberty* carefully and nosed alongside the tossing rowboat.

"No sign of Margaret," admitted Ned Burns, "and the lake's getting too rough for us to stay out much longer. We've had half a dozen waves break over us now."

"Better get in with us," advised Preston.

"Hand me the oars," said Mr. Linder, "and we'll let the rowboat drift. I'll pick it up in the morning." **[132]**

The boys tossed their oars into the *Liberty* and scrambled up into the motorboat.

Jim Preston threw in the clutch and the *Liberty* leaped ahead to resume its search for Margaret. Helen's lips were dry and fevered despite the steady showers of spray and her heart hammered madly. Lake Dubar had always had a nasty reputation for ugliness in a fresh, sharp wind but Helen had never before realized its true danger and what a lost and helpless feeling one could have on it at night, especially when a friend was missing.

There was no conversation as the *Liberty* continued across the choppy expanse of the lake. The searchlight picked up the far shore of the lake with the waves hammering against the rocks which lined that particular section. It was a grim, unnerving picture and Helen saw Jim Preston's jaw harden as he swung the *Liberty* around the cross back to Linder's side of the lake.

Back and forth the searchlight swung in its steady, never tiring arc, but it revealed only the danger of Lake Dubar at night. There was no sign of Margaret.

They reached the shore from which they had started and turned around for a third trip across the lake. This time they slapped through the waves at twenty-five miles an hour and every eye was trained to watch for some sign of the missing boat and girl. **[133]**

Helen caught a flash of white just as the searchlight reached the end of its arc.

"Wait!" she cried. "I saw something far to the

right."

Preston slapped the wheel of the *Liberty* over and the speedboat roared away in the direction Helen pointed, its questing searchlight combing the waves.

"There it is again," Helen cried and pointed straight ahead where they could discern some object half hidden by the waves.

"That's one of my boats," muttered old Mr. Linder as they drew nearer, "but it doesn't look like there was anyone in it."

"Don't, don't say that!" cried Helen. "There must be someone there. Margaret must be in it!"

In her heart she knew Mr. Linder was right. The boat was rolling in the choppy waves and there was no one visible.

"It's half full of water," exclaimed Ned Burns as they drew nearer and Jim Preston throttled down the *Liberty* and eased in the clutch. **[134]**

Helen pushed them aside and stared at the rowboat, fully revealed in the glaring rays of the searchlight. Tragedy was dancing on the waters of Lake Dubar that night, threatening to write an indelible chapter on the hearts of Helen and her classmates for there was no sign of Margaret in the boat.

"Maybe she shoved the boat out into the lake and hid in the woods," said Ned Burns.

"She wouldn't do that," protested Helen.

They edged nearer the rowboat, Preston handling the *Liberty* with care lest the waves created by the boat's powerful propeller capsize the smaller boat.

"There's something or someone in the back end," cried Ned Burns, who was three or four inches taller than anyone else in the boat.

Helen stood on tip-toe.

"It's Margaret," she cried. "Something's wrong. It looks like she's asleep."

But sleep in a water-logged rowboat in the middle of Lake Dubar was out of the question and Helen realized instantly that something unusual had happened to Margaret, something which would explain the whole joke which had turned out to be such a ghastly nightmare.

Jim Preston eased the *Liberty* alongside the rowboat and Mr. Linder reached down and picked Margaret up. There was a dark bruise over her left eye and her clothes were soaked. **[135]**

The boatman found an old blanket in one of the lockers and they wrapped Margaret in it and pillowed her head in Helen's lap.

Margaret's eyes were closed tightly but she was breathing slowly and her pulse was irregular.

"Hurry," Helen whispered to Jim Preston. "Head for Linder's. Her father will be there by this time."

The boatman sensed the alarm in Helen's words and he jerked open the throttle of the *Liberty*

and sent the boat racing through the night. In less than five minutes they were slowing down for the pier. The lights of a car were at the shore end of the landing and someone with an electric torch was awaiting their arrival. It was Doctor Stevens, pacing along the planks of the landing stage.

“Have you found Margaret?” he cried as the *Liberty* sidled up to the pier.

“Got her right here,” replied Jim Preston, “but she’s got a bad bump on her head.”

Doctor Stevens jumped into the boat and turned his flashlight on Margaret’s face. Helen saw his lips tighten into a thin straight line. He felt her pulse. **[136]**

“Run ahead,” he told Ned Burns, “and tell Mother Linder to open one of those spare beds of hers and get me plenty of hot water.”

He stooped and picked Margaret up in his arms, carrying her like a baby. Mr. Linder hurried ahead to light the way.

Helen stopped to talk with Jim Preston for a moment.

“I think you’d better take the class home,” she said. “There’s nothing more they can do here.”

“Will you go back with them now?” asked the boatman.

“No, I’m going to stay here tonight. I’ll phone mother.”

Helen turned and ran toward the farmhouse. Inside there was an air of quiet, suppressed activity.

Doctor Stevens had carried Margaret into the large downstairs bedroom which Mother Linder reserved for company occasions. Two kerosene lamps on a table beside the bed gave a rich light which softened the pallor of Margaret’s cheeks.

Doctor Stevens was busy with an injection from a hypodermic needle, working as though against time. Tragedy had danced on the tips of the waves a few minutes earlier but how close it came to entering the farmhouse only Doctor Stevens knew at that hour for Margaret’s strength, sapped by the terrifying experience on the lake, was near the breaking point and only the injection of a strong heart stimulant saved her life. **[137]**

Two hours later, hours which had been ages long to Helen as she sat beside the bed with the doctor, Margaret opened her eyes.

“Don’t talk, Marg,” begged Helen. “Everything is all right. You’re in a bedroom at the Linders and your father is here with you.”

Margaret nodded slightly and closed her eyes. It was another hour before she moved again and when she did Mother Linder was at hand with a steaming bowl of chicken broth. The nourishing food plus the hour of calm sleep had partially restored Margaret’s strength and when she had finished the broth she sat up in bed.

“I’ve been such a little fool,” she said, but her

father patted her hand.

"Don't apologize for what's happened," he said. "We're just supremely happy to have you here," his voice so low that only Margaret and Helen heard him. [138]

"I thought it would be a good joke to disappear when Miss Carver started telling the ghost story," explained Margaret. "I got the boat out into the lake without anyone seeing me and let it drift several hundred feet. When I tried to put the oars in the locks I stumbled, dropped them overboard and that's the last I knew, except that for hours I was falling, falling, falling, and always there was the noise of the waves."

Margaret slipped back into a deep, restful sleep when she had finished her story. Helen, worn by the hours of tension, slid out of her chair and onto the floor, and when Doctor Stevens picked her up she was sound asleep.

[139]

CHAPTER X
Behind the Footlights

By the first of the following week the near tragedy of the picnic seemed only a terrible nightmare to Helen and Margaret and they devoted all of their extra time to helping Tom get out the next edition of the *Herald*.

Monday morning's mail brought a long letter from Helen's father, a letter in which he praised them warmly for their first edition of the *Herald*. He added that he had recovered from the fatigue of his long trip into the southwest and was feeling much stronger and a great deal more cheerful. The newsy letter brightened the whole atmosphere of the Blair home and for the first time since their father had left, Tom and Helen saw their mother like her old self, smiling, happy and humming little tunes as she worked about the house.

Events crowded one on another as the school year neared its close. There were final examinations, the junior-senior banquet, the annual sophomore party and finally, graduation exercises.

The seniors had been rehearsing their play, "The Spell of the Image," for a month and for the final week had engaged a special dramatic instructor from Cranston to put the finishing touches on the cast. Helen had read the play several times. It was a comedy-drama concerning the finding of an ancient and valuable string of pearls in an old image. It had action, mystery and romance and she thrilled when she thought that in two more years she would be in her own class play. [140]

The dramatic instructor arrived. She was Anne Weeks, a slender, dark-haired girl of 25 who had attended the state university and majored in dramatics. Every boy in high school promptly thought he was in love with her.

The seniors rehearsed their parts every spare

hour and every evening. The play was to go on Thursday night with the graduation exercises Friday evening.

Dress rehearsal was called for Tuesday and Helen went down to the opera house to peek in and see how it was going. She found a disconsolate cast sitting around the stage, looking gloomily at Miss Weeks.

“This looks more like a party of mourners than a play practice,” observed Helen.

“It’s just about that bad,” replied Miss Weeks. “Sarah Jacobs has come down with a severe cold and can’t talk, which leaves us in a fine pickle.” **[141]**

“Won’t she be able to go on Thursday night?”

“It will be at least a week before she’ll be able to use her voice for a whole evening,” Miss Weeks said. “In the meantime, we’ve got to find another girl, about Sarah’s size, to play her part and every member of the senior class is in the play now.”

She stopped suddenly and looked at Helen.

“You’re about Sarah’s size,” she mused, “and you’re blonde and you have blue eyes. You’ll do, Helen.”

“Do for what?” asked the astounded Helen.

“Why, for Sarah’s part,” exclaimed Miss Weeks. “Come now, hurry up and get into Sarah’s costume,” and she pointed to a dainty colonial dress which the unfortunate Sarah was to have worn in the prologue.

“But I don’t know Sarah’s part well enough,” said Helen. “I’ve only read the play twice and then just for fun.”

“You’ll catch on,” said Miss Weeks, “if you’re half as smart as I think you are.”

“Go on, Helen,” urged the seniors. “Help us out. We’ve got to put the play across or we’ll never have enough money to pay Miss Weeks.”

“Now you know why I’m so anxious for you to take the part,” smiled the play instructor. **[142]**

“I’ll do my best,” promised Helen, gathering the costume under her arm and hurrying toward the girls’ dressing room.

Ten minutes later she emerged as a dainty colonial dame. Miss Weeks stared hard at her and then smiled an eminently satisfactory smile.

“Now if she can only get the lines in two nights,” she whispered to herself.

Helen’s reading of the play had given her a thorough understanding of the action and they went through the prologue without a slip. Scenery was shifted rapidly and the stage changed from a colonial ballroom to a modern garden scene. Costumes kept up with the scenery and when the members of the cast reappeared on the stage they were dressed in modern clothes.

Helen poured over the pages of the play book and because she had only a minor part in the

first act, got through it nicely. The second act was her big scene and she was decidedly nervous when it came time for her cue. One of the seniors was to make love to her and she didn't especially like him. But the play was the thing and the seniors certainly did need someone to take the vacant part.

She screwed up her courage and played the rôle for all it was worth. Once she forgot her lines but she managed to fake a little conversation and they got back to the regular lines without trouble. **[143]**

When the curtain was rung down on the third act Miss Weeks stepped out of the orchestra pit where she had been directing the changes in minor details of the action and came over to Helen.

"You're doing splendidly," she told the young editor of the *Herald*. "Don't worry about lines. Read them over thoroughly sometime tomorrow and we'll put the finishing touches on tomorrow night."

When Helen reached home Tom had returned from the office, his work done for the night.

"Thought you were just going down the street to see how play practice was coming?" he said.

"I did," Helen replied, "and I'm so thrilled, Tom. Sarah Jacobs, who has the juvenile lead in the play is ill with a sore throat and Miss Weeks asked me to take the part."

"Are you going to?"

"I have," smiled Helen. "That's where I've been. Rehearsing for the play Thursday night."

"Well, you're a fine editor," growled Tom. "How am I going to get out the paper?"

"Oh, you don't need to worry about copy," Helen assured him. "Margaret has half a dozen stories to turn in tomorrow noon and I'll have all of mine written by supper time. And I'll do my usual work Thursday afternoon." **[144]**

"I was just kidding," grinned Tom. "I think it's great that Miss Weeks picked you to fill in during the emergency. Quite a compliment, I say."

Helen's mother, who had been across the street at the Stevens', came home and Helen had to tell her story over again.

"What about your costumes?" asked her mother.

"The class rents the colonial dress for the prologue," explained Helen, "and for the other acts Miss Weeks is going to loan me some smart frocks from her own wardrobe. We're practically the same size."

"What a break for you," Tom laughed. "You'll be the smartest dressed girl in the class if I know anything about Miss Weeks."

"Which you don't!" retorted his sister.

Helen's regular Wednesday morning round of news gathering took her to the depot to meet the nine forty-five and she found the agent

waiting.

“Remember I promised you a story this week?” he said. [145]

“I’m ready to take it,” Helen smiled. “What we want is news, more news and then more news.”

“This is really a good story,” the railroad man assured her. “Wait until you see the nine forty-five.”

“What’s the matter? Is it two or three hours late?”

“It will be in right on time,” the agent promised.

Helen sat down on a box on the platform to await the arrival of the morning local. Resting there in the warm sunshine, she pulled her copy of the play book out of her pocket and read the second act, with her big scene, carefully. The words were natural enough and she felt that she would have little trouble remembering them.

She glanced at the depot clock. It was nine forty. The local should be whistling for the crossing down the valley. She looked in the direction from which the train was coming. There was no sign of smoke and she knew it would be late.

She had picked up her play book and turned to the third act when a mellow chime echoed through the valley. It was like a locomotive whistle and yet unlike one.

“New whistle on the old engine?” Helen asked the agent. [146]

“More than that,” he grinned.

The *Herald’s* editor watched for the train to swing into sight around a curve but instead of the black, stubby snout of the regular passenger engine, a train of three cars, seemingly moving without a locomotive, appeared and rolled smoothly toward the station.

As it came nearer Helen could hear the low roar of a powerful gasoline engine, which gradually dropped to a sputtering series of coughs as the three car train drew abreast the station.

“Latest thing in local trains,” exclaimed the agent. “It’s a gas-electric outfit with the motive power in the front end of the first car. Fast, clean and smooth and it’s economical to run. Don’t take a fireman.”

Helen jotted down hasty notes. Everyone in the town and countryside would be interested in seeing and reading about the new train.

The agent gave Helen a hand into the cab where the engineer obligingly explained the operation of the gas-electric engine.

The conductor called “All aboo-ord,” and Helen climbed down out of the cab.

The gasoline engine sputtered as it took up the load of starting the train. When the cars were once under way, it settled down to a steady rumble and the train picked up speed rapidly and rolled out of town on its way to the state capital. [147]

“What do you think of it?” asked the agent.

“It’s certainly a fine piece of equipment,” said Helen, “but I hate to see the old steam engines go. There’s something much more romantic about them than these new trains.”

“Oh, we’ll have steam on the freight trains,” the agent hastened to add. “Give us a good write up.”

“I will,” Helen promised as she started for the *Herald* office to write her story of the passing of the steam passenger trains on the branch line.

Margaret came in with a handful of school stories she had written during an assembly hour.

“Congratulations,” she said to Helen. “I’ve just heard about your part. You’ll put it across.”

“I’m glad you think so, Marg, for I’d hate to make a fizzle of it.”

Helen finished writing her copy for the paper that afternoon after school and before she went home to supper with Tom wrote the headlines for the main stories on page one.

“Did you write a story about the sophomore picnic and what happened to Margaret?” asked Tom. **[148]**

“It’s with the copy I just put on your machine,” Helen replied. “Everyone knows something about it and of course there is a lot of talk. I’ve seen Doctor Stevens and Margaret and they both agree that a story is necessary and that the simple truth is the best thing to say with no apologies and nothing covered up.”

“Doc Stevens is a brick,” exclaimed Tom. “Most men would raise the very dickens if such a story were printed but it will stop idle talk which is certainly much worse than having the truth known.”

“That’s the way he feels,” Helen said.

Margaret came over after supper to go down to the opera house with Helen for play practice.

“I’m getting almost as big a thrill out of it as Helen,” she told Mrs. Blair, “only I wouldn’t be able to put it across and Helen can.”

Miss Weeks had brought three dresses for Helen to wear, one for each act in the play. They were dainty, colorful frocks that went well with Helen’s blondness.

The stage was set with all of the properties for the prologue and Helen hastened into the girl’s dressing room to put on her colonial costume. When she returned to the stage, Miss Weeks was addressing the cast. **[149]**

“Remember,” she warned them, “that this is the last rehearsal. Everything is just as it will be tomorrow night. Imagine the audience is here tonight. Play up to them.”

The main curtain was dropped, the house lights went off and the battery of brilliant electrics in the footlights blazed.

The curtain moved slightly; then went up

smoothly and disappeared in the darkness above the stage. The play was on.

The prologue went smoothly and without a mistake and when the curtain dropped the stage became a scene of feverish activity.

“Five minutes to change,” Miss Weeks warned them as they went to their dressing rooms.

For the first act Helen was to wear a white sport dress with a blazing red scarf knotted loosely around her neck. She wiggled into her outfit, brushed her hair with deft hands, dabbed fresh powder on her cheeks, touched up her lips with scarlet and was ready for her cue. She said her lines with an ease and clearness that surprised even herself and was back in the wings and on her way to the dressing room almost before she knew it.

In the second act Helen had her big part and Miss Weeks had provided a black, velvet semiformal afternoon gown. It was fashioned in plain, clinging lines, caught around the waist with a single belt of braided cloth of gold and with the neckline trimmed in the same material. Golden slippers and hose and one bracelet, a heavy, imitation gold band, completed the accessories. **[150]**

Between acts Miss Weeks came into see how the costume fitted.

“Why, Helen,” she exclaimed. “You’re gorgeous —beautiful. Every boy in town will be crazy about you.”

“I’ll worry about that later,” Helen replied. “But I’m so glad you think I look all right.”

“You’re perfectly adorable.”

The praise from Miss Weeks buoyed Helen with an inner courage that made her fairly sparkle and she played her part for all it was worth. Again she forgot her lines but she managed to escape by faking conversation.

When the rehearsal was over, Margaret hastened to the stage.

“You’ll be the hit of the show,” she whispered to Helen. “And think of it, one of the sophomores running away with the seniors play.” **[151]**

“But I don’t intend to do that,” Helen replied. “I’m only here to help them out. Besides, I may forget my lines and make some terrible mistake tomorrow night.”

“You’ll do nothing of the kind,” Margaret insisted, as they left the theater.

Thursday was Helen’s busy day. Final examinations for two periods in the morning and then to the office after lunch to help Tom fold and mail the week’s edition of the *Herald*.

Tom had put the two pages for the last run on the press before going home for lunch so when they returned the press was ready for the afternoon’s work.

Advertising had not been quite as heavy as the first week and Tom had used every line of copy Helen had written, but the paper looked clean

and readable.

Helen stacked the papers on the makeup table and started folding. When Tom finished the press run he folded while Helen started stamping the names of the subscribers on the papers. By four o'clock every paper was in the postoffice and half an hour later they were ready to call it a day and lock up the office.

When Helen reached home her mother made her go to her room and rest for an hour before supper. **[152]**

They were eating when Margaret hurried in.

"Here are your tickets," she told Mrs. Blair. "I managed to get them exchanged so we'll all be together."

"But I thought you had decided not to go to the play?" Helen said to her mother.

"That was before you had a part in it," smiled Mrs. Blair.

"Where are you going to sit?"

"You don't want to know," put in Tom. "If you did, it would make you nervous. It's bad enough to know that we'll be there."

The cast had been called to meet on the stage at seven-fifteen for last minute instructions. The curtain was at eight-fifteen and that would give them an hour to dress and get into makeup.

Miss Weeks had little to say when she faced the group of seniors and the lone sophomore.

"Remember that this is no different from last night's rehearsal," she told them. "Play up to each other. If you forget a few lines, fake the conversation until you can get back to your cues. You will disappoint me greatly if you don't put on the best senior play ever given in Rolfe."

Then they were swept away in the rush of last minute preparations for the first call. The girl's dressing room was filled with the excited chatter of a dozen girls and the air was thick with the smell of grease paint and powder. Colonial costumes came out of the large wardrobe which filled one side of the room and there was the crisp rustle of silk as the girls donned their costumes. Miss Weeks moved through the room, adding a touch of makeup here and taking off a bit where some over-zealous young actress had been too enthusiastic. **[153]**

"Ten minutes," Miss Weeks warned the girls. "Everyone out and on the stage."

There was a general checkup on costumes and stage properties. Through the heavy curtain Helen heard the high school orchestra swing into the overture. The electrician moved the rheostat which dimmed the house lights. The banks of electrics in the flies about the stage awoke into glaring brilliance as the overture reached its crescendo. The stage was very quiet. Everyone was ready for the curtain.

All eyes were on Miss Weeks and Helen felt a last second flutter of her heart. In another second or two she would be in the full glare of the footlights. She was thankful that she had **[154]**

only a few lines in the prologue. It would give her time to gain a stage composure and prepare for her big scene in the second act.

Miss Weeks' hand moved. The man at the curtain shifted and it started slowly upward. Helen blinked involuntarily as she faced the full glare of the footlights. Beyond them she could see only a sea of faces, extending row on row toward the back of the theater. Somewhere out there her mother and Tom would be watching her. And with them would be Margaret and her parents.

The play was on and Helen forgot her first nervousness. Dainty colonial dames moved about the stage and curtsied before gallant white-wigged gentlemen. The prologue was short but colorful. Just enough to reveal that a precious string of pearls had been hidden in the ugly little image which reposed so calmly on a pedestal.

As the curtain descended, a wave of applause reached the stage. It was ardent and prolonged and Miss Weeks motioned for the cast to remain in their places. The curtain ascended half way and the cast curtsied before it descended again.

"You're doing splendidly," Miss Weeks told them. "Now everyone to the dressing rooms to change for the first act. Be back on the stage ready to go in five minutes." **[155]**

The girls flocked to the dressing room. Colonial costumes disappeared and modern dresses took their place. Helen slipped into her white sport outfit with the scarlet scarf. Her cheeks burned with the excitement of the hour. She dabbed her face with a powder puff and returned to the stage. The scenery had been shifted for the first act and the curtain went up on time to the second.

Helen felt much easier. Her first feeling of stage fright had disappeared and she knew she was the master of her own emotions. She refused to think of the possibility of forgetting her lines and resolved to put herself into the character she was playing and do and act in the coming situations, as that character would do.

Helen was on the stage only a few minutes during the first act and she had ample time to change for the second. The dressing room was almost deserted and she took her time. The heavy, black velvet dress Miss Weeks had loaned her was entrancing in its rich beauty and distinctiveness.

She combed her blond hair until it looked like burnished gold. Then she pulled it back and caught it at the nape of her neck. It was the most simple hair dress possible but the most effective in its sheer simplicity. **[156]**

Other girls crowded into the room. The first act was over. Miss Weeks came in and Helen stood up.

"Wonderful, Helen, wonderful," murmured the instructor, but not so loud that the other girls would hear.

There was the call for the second act and Helen went onto the stage. The senior she played

opposite came up.

“All set?” he asked.

Helen smiled, just a bit grimly, for she was determined to play her part for all it was worth.

The orchestra stopped playing and the curtain slid upward. She heard her cue and walked into the radiance of the lights. She heard the senior, her admirer in the play, talking to her. He was telling her of his recent adventures and how, at the end of a long, moonlit trail, he had finally come upon the girl of his dreams.

Then she heard herself replying, protesting that there was no such thing as love at first sight, but that ardent young Irish adventurer refused no for an answer and Helen backed away from him.

She heard a warning hiss from the wings but it was too late. She walked backwards into a pedestal with a vase of flowers. **[157]**

There was a sudden crash of the falling pedestal and the tinkle of breaking glass.

The audience roared with laughter.

Helen was stunned for the moment. In her chance to make good in high school dramatics she had clumsily backed into the stand and upset it, breaking the vase. Tears welled into her eyes and her lips trembled. The senior was staring at her, too surprised to talk.

The laughter continued, and Helen seized the only chance for escape. Could she make it appear that the accident was a part of the play, a deliberate bit of comedy?

“Smile,” she whispered to the senior. “We can make it look like a part of the play. Follow my cue.” He nodded slightly to show that he understood.

The laughter subsided enough for them to continue their lines and Helen managed to smile. She hoped it wouldn’t look too forced.

“Look what you made me do,” she said, pointing at the wreckage of the vase.

“Sorry,” smiled the senior. “I’m just that way about you.” **[158]**

Then they swung back into the lines of the play and three minutes later Helen was again in the wings.

Miss Weeks was waiting for her and Helen expected a sharp criticism.

“Supreme comedy,” congratulated the dramatic instructor. “How did you happen to think of that?”

“But I didn’t think of it,” protested Helen. “It was an accident. I was scared to death.”

Miss Weeks stared at her hard.

“Well,” she commented, “you certainly carried it off splendidly. It was the best comedy touch of the show.”

The third act went on and then “The Spell of the Image” was over. The curtain came down on the

final curtain call. The orchestra blared as the audience left the hall while parents and friends trooped onto the stage to congratulate the members of the cast.

Helen suddenly felt very tired and there was a mist in her eyes, but she brightened visibly when her mother and Tom, followed by the Stevens, pushed through the crowd. She listened eagerly to their praises and to Tom's whole-hearted exclamations over her beauty and charm. **[159]**

Then the lights of the stage dimmed. She had had her hour as an actress; she knew she had acquitted herself well. The smell of grease, paint and powder faded and she was a newspaperwoman again—the editor of the *Herald*.

[160]

CHAPTER XI
New Plans

With the end of the school year Tom and Helen were able to give their complete time and energies to the *Herald*. When Monday, the first of June arrived, they were working on their fourth issue of the *Herald* and Helen had written a number of stories on the last week's activities at school, the graduation exercises, the junior-senior dinner and the senior class play. She praised Miss Weeks highly for her work with the class play and lauded the seniors for their fine acting. Although urged that she say something about her own part, Helen steadfastly refused and her brother finally gave up in disgust and delved in to the ledger for on his shoulders fell the task of making out the monthly bills and handling all of the business details of the paper.

When Tom had completed his bookkeeping he turned to his sister.

"Helen," he began, "we're not making enough."

"But, Tom," she protested, "the paper is carrying more advertising than when Dad ran it."

"Yes, but our expenses are high," said Tom. "We've got to look ahead all the time. Dad will have used all of the money he took with him in a little less than six months. After that it will be up to us to have the cash in the bank. Right now we've just a little under a hundred dollars in the bank. Current bills will take more than that, and our own living expenses, that is for mother and we two, will run at least $100 a month. With our total income from the paper only slightly more than $200 a month on the basis of the present amount of advertising, you see we're not going to be able to save much toward helping Dad." **[161]**

"Then we'll have to find ways of increasing our volume of business," said Helen.

"That won't be easy to do in a town this size," replied Tom, "and I won't go out and beg for advertising."

"No one is going to ask you to," said Helen.

"We'll make the *Herald* such a bright, outstanding paper that all of the business men will want to advertise."

"We'll do the best we can," agreed Tom.

"Then let's start right now by putting in a farm page," suggested Helen.

"But there won't be many farm sales from now on," argued Tom.

"No," conceded his sister, "but there is haying, threshing and then corn picking and all of the stores have supplies to sell to the farmers." **[162]**

"I believe you're right. If you'll do the collecting this afternoon, I'll go down to Gladbrook and see if we can get the cooperation of the county agent. Lots of the townships near here have farm bureaus and I'll get the names of all of their leaders and we'll write and tell them what we plan to do."

After lunch Tom teased the family flivver into motion and set out for Gladbrook while Helen took the sheaf of bills and started the rounds of the business houses. She had no trouble getting her money from all of the regular advertisers and in every store in which she stopped she took care to ask the owner about news of the store and of his family. She noticed that it flattered each one and she resolved to call on them at least once a week.

Tom returned from Gladbrook late in the afternoon. He was enthusiastic over the success of his talk with the county agent.

"He's a fine chap," Tom explained. "Had a course in agricultural journalism in college and knows news and how to write it. The Gladbrook papers, the *News* and the *Times*, don't come up in this section of the county and he'll be only too glad to send us a column each week." **[163]**

"When will he start?"

"Next week will be the first one. He'll mail his column every Tuesday evening and we'll have it on the Wednesday morning mail. Now, here's even better news. I went to several of the department stores at Gladbrook and told them we were going to put out a real farm page. They're actually anxious to buy space and by driving down there once a week I can get two or three good ads."

"How will the local merchants feel?" asked Helen.

"They won't object," replied Tom, "for I was careful to stress that I would only accept copy which would not conflict with that used by our local stores."

"That was a wise thing to do," Helen said. "We can't afford to antagonize our local advertisers. I made the rounds and collected all of the regular accounts. There's only about eighteen dollars outstanding on this month's bills and I'll get all but about five dollars of that before the week is over."

"Want to go to Cranston Friday or Saturday?" asked Tom.

"I surely do," Helen replied. "But what for, Tom, and can we afford it?" [164]

"One of us will have to make the trip," her brother said. "Putting on this farm page means we'll have to print two more pages at home, six altogether, and will need only two pages of ready-print a week from the World Printing Company. We'll go down and talk with their manager at Cranston and select the features we want for the two pages they will continue to print for us."

"Our most important features in the ready-print now are the comics, the serial story and the fashion news for women," said Helen.

"Then we'll have one page of comics," said Tom, "and fill the other page with features of special interest to our women readers."

The next three days found the young Blairs so busy getting out the current edition of the paper that they had little time to talk about their plans.

They had decided to go to Cranston Friday but when Helen found that there were special rates for Saturday, they postponed the trip one day. When the Friday morning mail arrived, Helen was glad they had changed their plans. While sorting the handful of letters, most of them circulars destined for the wastepaper basket, she came upon the letter she had been looking forward to for days. The words in the upper left hand corner thrilled her. It was from the Cranston bureau of the Associated Press.

With fingers that trembled slightly, she tore it open. Would she get the job as Rolfe correspondent? A green slip dropped out of the envelope and Tom, who had come in from the composing room, reached down and picked it up. [165]

"Ten dollars!" he whistled.

"What's that?" demanded Helen, incredulously.

"It's your check from the Associated Press for covering the tornado," explained Tom. "Look!"

Helen took the slip of crisp, green paper. She wasn't dreaming. It was a check, made out in her name and for $10.

"But there must be some mistake," she protested. "They didn't mean to pay me that much."

"If you think there's a mistake," grinned Tom, "you can go and see them when we reach Cranston tomorrow. However, if I were you, I'd tuck it in my pocket, invite my brother across the street to the drug store, and buy him a big ice cream soda."

"Wait until I see what the letter says," replied Helen. She pulled it out of the envelope and Tom leaned over to read it with her.

"Dear Miss Blair," it started, "enclosed you will find check for your fine work in reporting the tornado near Rolfe. Please consider this letter as your appointment as Rolfe correspondent for the Associated Press. Serious accidents, fires of more than $5,000 damage and deaths of prominent people should be sent as soon as [166]

possible. Telegraph or telephone, sending all your messages collect. In using the telegraph, send messages by press rate collect when the story is filed in the daytime. If at night, send them night press collect. And remember, speed counts but accuracy must come first. Stories of a feature or time nature should be mailed. We are counting on you to protect us on all news that breaks in and near Rolfe. Very truly yours, Alva McClintock, Correspondent in charge of the Cranston Bureau."

"He certainly said a lot in a few words," was Tom's comment. "Now you're one up on me. You're editor of the *Herald* and Associated Press correspondent and I'm only business manager."

"Don't get discouraged," laughed Helen, "I'll let you write some of the Associated Press stories."

"Thanks of the compliment," grinned Tom. "I'm still waiting for that ice cream soda, Miss Plutocrat."

"You'll grumble until I buy it, I suppose, so I might as well give in right now," said Helen. "Come on. I'm hungry for one myself." **[167]**

Tom and Helen boarded the nine forty-five Saturday morning and arrived at the state capital shortly after noon. It was Helen's first trip to Cranston and she enjoyed every minute of it, the noise and confusion of the great railroad terminal, the endless bobbing about of the red caps, the cries of news boys heralding noonday editions and the ceaseless roar of the city.

They went into the large restaurant at the station for lunch and after that Tom inquired at the information desk for directions on how to reach the plant of the World Printing Company. He copied the information on a slip of paper and the two young newspaper people boarded a street car.

Half an hour later they were on the outskirts of the industrial district and even before the conductor called their stop, Tom heard the steady roar of great presses.

"Here we are," he told Helen as they stepped down from the car and looked up at a hulking ten story building that towered above them.

"The Cranston plant of the *Rolfe Herald*," chuckled Helen. "Lead on."

They walked up the steps into the office, gave their names and indicated their business to the office girl. After waiting a few minutes they were ushered into an adjoining office where an energetic, middle aged man who introduced himself as Henry Walker, service manager, greeted them. **[168]**

"Let's see, you're from the *Rolfe Herald*?" he asked.

"My sister and I are running the paper while Dad is in the southwest regaining his health," explained Tom. "We've got to expand the paper to increase our advertising space and the only thing we can see to do is cut down our ready-print to two pages."

"Explain just what you mean," suggested the service manager.

Tom outlined their advertising field and how they hoped to increase business by adding two more pages of home print, one of which would be devoted to farm advertising and news and the other to be available for whatever additional advertising they could produce.

“We’ll be sorry to have you drop two pages of ready-print,” said Mr. Walker, “but I believe you’re doing the right thing. Now let’s see what you want on the two pages you’ll retain.”

“Helen is editor,” Tom explained, “and it’s up to her to pick out what she wants.” **[169]**

“You’re doing a splendid job on the *Herald*,” the service manager told Helen. “I get copies of every paper we serve and I’ve been noticing the changes in make-up and the lively stories. However, I am sorry to hear about your father but with you two youngsters to give him pep and courage he ought to be back on the job in a few months.”

“We’re sure he will,” smiled Helen as she unfolded a copy of their last edition of the *Herald*. “I’ve pasted up two pages of the features I want to retain,” she explained as she placed them in front of the service manager.

“I see,” he said. “You’re going to be quite metropolitan with a full page of comics and a page devoted to women. I’m glad of that. Too many editors of weeklies fail to realize that the women and not the men are the real readers of their papers. If you run a paper which appeals to women and children you’ll have a winner. Comics for the youngsters and a serial story with a strong love element and fashions and style news for the women.”

“How about cost?” asked Tom.

“Dropping the two pages won’t quite cut your bill with us in half,” explained Mr. Walker, “for you’re retaining all of our most expensive features. However, this new plan of yours will reduce your weekly bill about 40 per cent.” **[170]**

“That’s satisfactory,” agreed Tom, “and we’d like to have it effective at once. Helen has written the headings she wants for each page.”

“We’ll send the pages, made up in the new way, down at the usual time next week,” promised the service manager, “and when there is anything else we can do, don’t hesitate to let us know.”

When they were out of the building, they paused to decide what to do next.

“I liked Mr. Walker,” said Helen. “He didn’t attempt to keep us from making the change. It means less money for his company yet he didn’t object.”

“It was good business on his part,” replied Tom. “Now we feel kindly toward him and although he has lost temporarily he will gain in the end for we’ll give him every bit of business we can in the way of ordering supplies for job printing and extra stock for the paper.”

“If we have time,” suggested Helen, “I’d like to go down to the Associated Press office.”

“Good idea,” agreed Tom. “I’d like to see how **[171]**

they handle all of the news."

They boarded the first down town street car and got off fifteen minutes later in the heart of Cranston's loop district. Across the street was the building which housed the *Cranston Chronicle*, the largest daily newspaper in the state. They consulted the directory in the lobby of the building and took the elevator to the fifth floor where the Associated Press offices were located.

They stepped out of the elevator and into a large room, filled with the clatter of many machines. A boy, his face smeared with blue smudges off carbon paper, rushed up to them and inquired their business.

"I'm Helen Blair, a new correspondent at Rolfe," explained the editor of the *Herald*, "and I'd like to see Mr. McClintock, the chief correspondent."

"Okay," grinned the boy. "I'll tell him. You wait here."

The youngster hurried across the room to a large table, shaped like a half moon and behind which sat a touseled haired chap of indeterminate age. He might be 30 and he might be 40, decided Helen.

"Glad to know you, Miss Blair," he said. "You did a nice piece of work on the storm." **[172]**

"Thank you, Mr. McClintock," replied Helen. "But my brother, Tom, deserves all of the credit. He suggested calling the story to you."

"Then I'll thank Tom, too," laughed the head of the Cranston bureau of the Associated Press.

"We're here today on business for our paper," explained Helen, "and with a few minutes to spare before train time hoped you wouldn't mind if we came in and saw how the 'wheels go round' here."

"I'll be happy to show you the 'works'," replied Mr. McClintock, and he took them over to a battery of electric printers.

"These," he explained, "bring us news from every part of the country, east, south and far west. In reality, they are electric typewriters controlled from the sending station in some other city. We take the news which comes in here, sift it out and decide what will interest people in our own state, and send it on to daily papers in our territory."

"Do these electric printers run all day?" asked Tom.

"Some of them go day and night," continued Mr. McClintock, "for the A.P. never sleeps. Whenever news breaks, we've got to be ready to cover it. That's why we appreciated your calling us on the storm. We knew there was trouble in your part of the state but we didn't have a correspondent at Rolfe. It was a mighty pleasant surprise when you phoned." **[173]**

They visited with the Associated Press man for another fifteen minutes and would have continued longer if Tom had not realized that they had less than twenty minutes to make their train. The last two blocks to the terminal were

covered at a run and they raced through the train gates just before they clanged shut.

“Close call,” panted Tom as they swung onto the steps of the local and it slid out of the train shed.

“Too close,” agreed Helen, who was breathless from their dash.

“Had to make it, though,” added Tom, “or we’d have been stranded here flat broke with the next train for home Monday night.”

“Don’t worry about something that didn’t happen,” Helen said. “I’ve enjoyed every minute of our trip and we’re all ready now to start our expansion program for the *Herald* in earnest.”

Adding two more pages of home print to the paper meant more work than either Tom or Helen had realized. There was more news to be written and more ads to be set and another run to be made on the press. **[174]**

With early June at hand the summer season at the resorts on the lower end of Lake Dubar got under way and Helen resolved to make a trip at least once a week and run a column or two of personals about people coming and going. She also gave liberal space to the good roads election in July, stressing the value the paved scenic highway would be to Rolfe.

The two pages of ready-print arrived on Tuesday and Tom and Helen were delighted with the appearance of the comic page and the feature page for women readers.

“We’ll have the snappiest looking paper in the county,” chuckled Tom. “Dad won’t know the old paper when he sees this week’s issue.”

The county agent kept his promise to send them at least a column of farm news and Helen made it a point to gather all she could while Tom went to the county seat Tuesday morning and solicited ads for the page. The result was a well-balanced page, half ads and half news. Careful solicitation of home town merchants also brought additional ads and when they made up the last two pages Thursday noon they felt the extra work which increasing the size of the paper meant was more than repaid in extra advertising.

“I’m printing a number of extra copies this week,” explained Tom. “There are lots of people around here who ought to take the *Herald*. With our expansion program we may pick up some extra subscriptions and we might get a chance at the county printing.” **[175]**

“Tom!” exclaimed Helen. “Do you really think we might get to be an official county paper.”

“I don’t see why not,” said Tom. “Of course the two Gladbrook papers will always be on the county list but there are always three who print the legal news and the third one is the *Auburn Advocate*. Auburn isn’t any larger than Rolfe and I know darned well we have almost as many subscriptions as they do.”

“How do they decide the official papers?” Helen wanted to know.

“The county board of supervisors meets once a

year to select the three official papers," Tom explained, "and the three showing the largest circulation are selected. It would mean at least $2,000 extra revenue to us, most of which would be profit."

"Then why didn't Dad try for it?" Helen asked. [176]

"I'm not sure," said Tom slowly. "There are probably several reasons, the principal one being that he wasn't strong enough to make the additional effort to build up the circulation list. The other is probably Burr Atwell, owner and publisher of the *Auburn Advocate*. I've heard Dad often remark that Atwell is the crookedest newspaperman in the state."

"How much circulation do you think the *Advocate* has now?" Helen asked.

"Their last postoffice statement showed only 108 more than ours," replied Tom.

"And when do the supervisors have their annual meeting?"

"About the 15th of December," said Tom. "Now what's up?"

"Nothing much," smiled Helen. "Only, when the supervisors meet next the *Rolfe Herald* is going to have enough circulation to be named an official county paper.

"Why Tom," she went on enthusiastically, "think what it would mean to Dad?"

"I'm thinking of that," nodded her brother, "but I'm also thinking of what Burr Atwell might do to the *Herald*."

[177]

CHAPTER XII
Special Assignment

The enlarged edition of the *Herald* attracted so much comment and praise from the readers that Tom and Helen felt well repaid for their additional efforts. Tom sat down and figured out the profit, deducted all expenses, and announced that they had made $78 on the edition, which, they agreed, was a figure they should strive to reach each week.

"If we can keep that up," commented Tom, "we'll be sitting on top of the world."

"But if we were only an official county paper we'd have the moon, too," Helen said.

They discussed the pros and cons of getting enough additional circulation to beat the *Auburn Advocate* and the danger of arousing the anger of Burr Atwell, its publisher.

"We don't need to make a big campaign for subscriptions," argued Helen. "We've taken the biggest step right now—improving and expanding the amount of local and country reading matter. Whenever I have an extra afternoon this summer I'll drive out in the

country and see if I can't get some people who haven't been subscribers to take our paper."

Tom agreed with Helen's suggestion and that very afternoon they took the old family touring car, filled it with gas and oil, and ambled through the countryside. Tom had a list of farmers who were non-subscribers and before the afternoon was over they had added half a dozen new names to the *Herald's* circulation list. In addition, they had obtained at least one item of farm news at every place they stopped. **[178]**

"I call that a good afternoon's work," Helen commented when they drove the ancient flivver into the garage at home.

"Not bad at all," Tom agreed. "Only, we'll keep quiet about our circulation activities. No use to stir up Burr Atwell until he finds it out for himself, which will be soon enough."

The remaining weeks of June passed uneventfully. The days were bright and warm with the softness of early summer and the countryside was green with a richness that only the middle west knows. Helen devoted the first part of each week to getting news in Rolfe and on Fridays and Saturdays took the old car and rambled through the countryside, stopping at farmhouses to make new friends for the *Herald* and gather news for the farm page. The revenue of the paper was increasing rapidly and they rejoiced at the encouraging news which was coming from their father.

The Fourth of July that year came on Saturday, which meant a two day celebration for Rolfe and the summer resorts on Lake Dubar. Special trains would be routed in over the railroad and the boats on the lake would do a rushing business. **[179]**

The managers of Crescent Beach and Sandy Point planned big programs for their resorts and ordered full page bills to be distributed throughout that section of the state. The county seat papers had usually obtained these large job printing orders but by carefully figuring, Tom put in the lowest bids.

Kirk Foster, the manager of Crescent Beach, ordered five thousand posters while Art Provost, the owner of Sandy Point, ordered twenty thousand. Crescent Beach catered to a smaller and more exclusive type of summer visitors while Sandy Point welcomed everyone to its large and hospitable beach.

There was not much composition for the posters but the printing required hours and it seemed to Helen that the old press rattled continuously for the better part of three days as Tom fed sheet after sheet of paper into the ancient machine. The wonder of it was that they had no breakdowns and the bills were printed and delivered on time. **[180]**

"All of which means," said Tom when he had finished, "that we've added a clear profit of $65 to our bank account."

"If we keep on at this rate," Helen added, "we'll have ample to take care of Dad when he needs more money."

“And he’ll be needing it sometime this fall,” Tom said slowly. “Gee whizz, but it sure does cost to be in one of those sanitariums. Lucky we could step in and take hold here for Dad.”

“We owe him more than we’ll ever repay,” said Helen, “and the experience we’re getting now will be invaluable. We’re working hard but we find time to do the things we like.”

Helen planned special stories for the edition just before the Fourth and visited the managers of both resorts to get their complete programs for the day.

Kirk Foster at Crescent Beach explained that there would be nothing unusual there except the special display of night fireworks but Art Provost over at Sandy Point had engaged a line of free attractions that would rival any small circus. Besides the usual boating and bathing, there would be free acts by aerialists, a high dive by a girl into a small tank of water, half a dozen clowns to entertain the children, a free band concert both afternoon and evening, two ball games and in addition to the merry-go-round on the grounds there would be a ferris wheel and several other “thrill” rides brought in for the Fourth. **[181]**

“You ought to have a great crowd,” said Helen.

“Goin’ to be mighty disappointed if I don’t,” said the old resort manager. “Plannin’ a regular rip-snorter of a day. No admission to the grounds, but Boy! it’ll cost by the time they leave.”

“Going to double the prices of everything?” asked Helen.

“Nope. Goin’ to have so many things for folks to do they’ll spend everything they got before they leave.”

“In that case,” replied Helen, “I see where I stay at home. I’m a notorious spendthrift when it comes to celebrating the Fourth.”

“I should say you’re not goin’ to stay home,” said Mr. Provost. “You and your mother and Tom are goin’ to be my guests. I’ve got your passes all filled out. Swim, ride in the boats, dance, roller skate, see the ball games, enjoy any of the ‘thrill rides’ you want to. Won’t cost you a cent.”

“But I can’t accept them,” protested Helen. “We’ll pay if we come down. Besides, we didn’t give you all of those bills for nothing.” **[182]**

“Seemed mighty near nothin’ compared with the prices all the other printers in the county wanted,” smiled Mr. Provost. “You’ve been down every week writin’ items about the folks who come here and, believe me, I appreciate it. These passes are just a little return of the courtesy you’ve shown me this summer.”

“When you put it that way, I can scarcely refuse them,” laughed Helen.

“As a matter of fact,” she added, “I wanted them terribly for we honestly couldn’t afford to come otherwise.”

When Helen returned to the office she told Tom about the passes and he agreed that acceptance of them would not place the *Herald* under

obligation to the resort owner.

"I always thought old man Provost a pretty good scout," he said, "but I hardly expected him to do this. And say, these passes are good for both Saturday and Sunday. What a break!"

"If we see everything Saturday we'll be so tired we won't want to go back Sunday," Helen said. "Besides, Mother has some pretty strong ideas on Sunday celebrations." **[183]**

The telephone rang and Helen hastened into the editorial office to answer.

She talked rapidly for several minutes, jotting down notes on a pad of scratch paper. When she had finished, she hurried back into the composing room.

"Tom," she cried, "that was Mr. Provost calling."

"Did he cancel the passes?"

"I should say not. He called to say he had just received a telegram from the Ace Flying Circus saying it would be at Sandy Point to do stunt flying and carry passengers for the Fourth of July celebration."

"Why so excited about that? We've had flying circuses here before."

"Yes, I know, Tom, but 'Speed' Rand is in charge of the Ace outfit this year."

"'Speed' Rand!" whistled Tom. "Well, I should say that was different. That's news. Why Rand's the man who flew from Tokyo to Seattle all alone. Other fellows had done it in teams but Rand is the only one to go solo. He's big news in all of the dailies right now. Everyone is wondering what daredevil stunt he'll do next."

"He's very good looking and awfully rich," smiled Helen. **[184]**

"Flies just for fun," added Tom. "With all of the oil land he's got he doesn't have to worry about work. Tell you what, I'll write to the *Cranston Chronicle* and see if they'll send us a cut of Rand. It would look fine on the front page of this week's issue."

"Oh," exclaimed Helen "I almost forgot the most important part of Mr. Provost's call. He wants you to get out 10,000 half page bills on the Ace Flying Circus. Here are the notes. He said for you to write the bill and run them off as soon as you can."

The order for the bills put Tom behind on his work with the paper and it was late Thursday afternoon before Helen started folding that week's issue. But they didn't mind being late. The bill order from Sandy Point had meant another piece of profitable job work and Mr. Provost had also taken a half page in the *Herald* to advertise the coming of his main attraction for the Fourth. Mrs. Blair came down to help with the folding and Margaret Stevens, just back from a vacation in the north woods with her father, arrived in time to lend a hand.

"Nice trip?" Helen asked as she deftly folded the printed sheets. **[185]**

“Wonderful,” smiled Margaret, “but I’m glad to get back. I missed helping you and Tom. Honestly, I get a terrific thrill out of reporting.”

“We’re glad to have you back,” replied Helen, “and I think Mr. Provost down at Sandy Point will be glad to give me an extra pass for the Fourth. I’ll tell him you’re our star reporter.”

“I’d rather go to Crescent Beach for the Fourth,” said Margaret. “It’s newer and much more ritzy than Sandy Point.”

“You’d better stop and look at the front page carefully,” warned Tom, who had shut off the press just in time to hear Margaret’s words.

She stopped folding papers long enough to read the type under the two column picture on the front page.

“What!” she exclaimed, “‘Speed’ Rand coming here?”

“None other and none such,” laughed Tom. “Guaranteed to be the one and only ‘Speed’ Rand. Step right this way folks for your airplane tickets. Five dollars for five minutes. See the beauty of Lake Dubar from the air. Don’t crowd, please.”

“Do you still want me to get a pass?” Helen asked. “It will be honored any place at Sandy Point during the celebration and Mr. Provost says we can all have rides with the air circus ‘Speed’ Rand is running.” **[186]**

“I should say I do want a pass,” said Margaret. “At least it’s some advantage to being a newspaper woman besides just the fun of it.”

The famous Ace air circus of half a dozen planes roared over Rolfe just before sunset Friday night and the whole town turned out to see them and try to identify the plane which “Speed” Rand was flying.

The air circus was flying in two sections, three fast, trim little biplanes that led the way, followed by three large cabin planes used for passenger carrying. Every ship was painted a brilliant scarlet and they looked like tongues of flames darting through the sky, the afternoon sun glinting on their wings.

The air circus swung over Rolfe in a wide circle and the leading plane dropped down out of the sky, its motor roaring so loud the windows in the houses rattled in their frames.

“He’s going to crash!” cried Margaret.

“Nothing of the kind,” shouted Tom, who had read widely of planes and pilots and flying maneuvers. “That’s just a power dive—fancy flying.” **[187]**

Tom was right. When the scarlet biplane seemed headed for certain destruction the pilot pulled its nose up, levelled off, shot over Rolfe at dizzying speed and then climbed his craft back toward the fleecy, lazy white clouds.

“That’s Rand,” announced Tom with a certainty that left no room for argument. “He’s always up to stunts like that.”

“It must be awfully dangerous,” said Helen as she watched the plane, now a mere speck in the sky.

“It is,” agreed Tom. “Everything depends on the motor in a dive like that. If it started to miss some editor would have to write that particular flyer’s obituary.”

The morning of Saturday, the Fourth, dawned clear and bright. Small boys whose idea of fun was to arise at four o’clock and spend the next two hours throwing cannon crackers under windows had their usual good time and Tom and Helen, unable to sleep, were up at six o’clock. Half an hour later Margaret Stevens, also awakened by the almost continuous cannonading of firecrackers, came across the street.

“Jim Preston is going to take us down the lake on his seven-thirty trip before the special trains and the big crowds start coming in,” said Tom. **[188]**

“But I’d like to see the trains come in,” protested Helen.

“If we wait until then,” explained Tom, “we’ll be caught in the thick of the rush for the boats and we may never get to Sandy Point. We’d better take the seven-thirty boat.”

From the hill on which the Blair home stood they looked down on the shore of Lake Dubar with its half dozen boat landings, each with two or three motorboats awaiting the arrival of the first special excursion train.

Mrs. Blair called them to breakfast and they were getting up to go inside when Margaret’s exclamation drew their attention back to the lake.

“Am I seeing things or is that the old *Queen*?” she asked, pointing down the lake.

Tom and Helen looked in the direction she pointed. An old, double decked boat, smoke rolling from its lofty, twin funnels, was churning its way up the lake.

“We may all be seeing things,” cried Tom, “but it looks like the *Queen*. I thought she had been condemned by the steamboat inspectors as unfit for further service.” **[189]**

“The news that ‘Speed’ Rand is going to be at Sandy Point is bringing hundreds more than the railroad expected,” said Helen. “I talked with the station agent last night and they have four specials scheduled in this morning and they usually only have two.”

“If they vote the paved roads at the special election next week,” commented Tom, “the railroad will lose a lot of summer travel. As it is now, folks almost have to come by train for the slightest rain turns the roads around here into swamps and they can’t run the risk of being marooned here for several days.”

The *Queen* puffed sedately toward shore. They heard the clang of bells in the engine room and the steady chouf-chouf of the exhaust cease. The smoke drifted lazily from the funnels. Bells clanged again and the paddle wheel at the stern went into the back motion, churning the water

into white froth. The forward speed of the *Queen* was checked and the big double-decker nosed into its pier.

"There's old Capt. Billy Tucker sticking his white head out of the pilot house," said Tom. "He's probably put a few new planks in the *Queen's* rotten old hull and gotten another O. K. from the boat inspectors. But if that old tub ever hits anything, the whole bottom will cave in and she'll sink in five minutes." **[190]**

"That's not a very cheerful Fourth of July idea," said Margaret. "Come on, let's eat. Your mother called us hours ago."

They had finished breakfast and were leaving the table when Mrs. Blair spoke.

"I've decided not to go down to Sandy Point with you," she said. "The crowd will be so large I'm afraid I wouldn't enjoy it very much."

"But we've planned on your going, Mother," said Helen.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," smiled her mother, "but Margaret's mother and I will spend the day on the hill here. We'll be able to see the aerial circus perform and really we'll enjoy a quiet day here at home more than being in the crowd."

"It won't be very quiet if those kids keep on shooting giant crackers," said Tom.

"They'll be going to the celebration in another hour or two and then things will quiet down," said Mrs. Blair.

"How about a plane ride if the circus has time to take us?" asked Tom. **[191]**

Helen saw her mother tremble at Tom's question, but she replied quickly.

"That's up to you, Tom. You know more about planes than I do and if you're convinced the flying circus is safe, I have no objection." But Helen made a mental reservation that the planes would have to look mighty safe before any of them went aloft.

They hurried down the hill to the pier which Jim Preston used. The boatman and his helpers had just finished polishing the three speed boats Preston owned, the *Argosy*, the *Liberty* and the *Flyer*, which had been raised from the bottom of the lake and partially rebuilt.

"All ready for the big day?" asked the genial boatman.

"We're shy a few hours sleep," grinned Tom. "Those cannon crackers started about four o'clock but outside of that we're all pepped up and ready to go."

"About three or four years ago," reminded the boatman, "you used to be gallivantin' around town with a pocketful of those big, red crackers at sun-up. Guess you can't complain a whole lot now."

Tom admitted that he really couldn't complain and they climbed into the *Liberty*. **[192]**

“I’m takin’ some last minute supplies down to the hotel at Sandy Point,” said the boatman, “so we won’t wait for anyone else.”

He switched on the starter and the boat quivered as the powerful motor took hold. They were backing away from the pier when the pilot of one of the other boats shouted for them to stop.

A boy was running down Main Street, waving a yellow envelope in his hand.

Jim Preston nosed the *Liberty* back to the pier and the boy ran onto the dock.

“Telegram for you,” he told Helen. “It’s a rush message and I just had to get it to you.”

“Thanks a lot,” replied Helen. “Are there any charges?”

“Nope. Message is prepaid.”

Helen ripped open the envelope with nervous fingers. Who could be sending her a telegram? Was there anything wrong with her father? No, that couldn’t be it for her mother would have received the message.

She unfolded the single sheet of yellow paper and read the telegraph operator’s bold scrawl.

“To: Helen Blair, *The Herald*, Rolfe. Understand ‘Speed’ Rand is at Rolfe for two days. Have rumor his next flight will be an attempted non-stop refueling flight around the world. See Rand at once and try for confirmation of rumor. Telephone as soon as possible. McClintock, The AP.” **[193]**

Helen turned to Tom and Margaret.

“I’m to interview ‘Speed’ Rand for the Associated Press,” she exclaimed. “Let’s go!”

[194]

CHAPTER XIII
Helen’s Exclusive Story

While the *Liberty* whisked them through the glistening waters of Lake Dubar toward Sandy Point, Margaret and Tom plied Helen with questions.

“Do you think Rand will give you an interview?” demanded Tom.

“I’ve got to get one,” said Helen, her face flushed and eyes glowing with the excitement of her first big assignment for the Associated Press.

“What will you ask him? How will you act?” Margaret wanted to know.

“Now don’t try to get me flustered before I see Rand,” laughed Helen. “I think I’ll just explain that I am the local correspondent for the Associated Press, show him the telegram from Mr. McClintock and ask him to confirm or deny

the story."

"I'll bet Rand's been interviewed by every famous reporter in the country," said Tom.

"Which will mean all the more honor and glory for Helen if she can get him to tell about his plans," said Margaret.

"I'll do my best," promised Helen and her lips set in a line that indicated the Blair fighting spirit was on the job. **[195]**

They were still more than two miles from Sandy Point when a scarlet-hued plane shot into sight and climbed dizzily toward the clouds. It spiralled up and up, the roar of its motor audible even above the noise of the speedboat's engine.

"There's 'Speed' Rand now!" cried Tom. "No one flies like that but 'Speed'."

The graceful little plane reached the zenith of its climb, turned over on its back and fell away in twisting series of spirals that held the little group in the boat breathless.

The plane fluttered toward the lake, seemingly without life or power. Just before it appeared about to crash, the propeller fanned the sunlight, the nose jerked up, and the little ship skimmed over the waters of the lake.

It was coming toward the *Liberty* at 200 miles an hour. On and on it came until the roar of its motor drowned out every other sound. Helen, Tom and Margaret threw themselves onto the floor of the boat and Jim Preston crouched low behind his steering wheel.

There was a sharp crash and Helen held her breath. She was sure the plane had struck the *Liberty* but the boat moved steadily ahead and she turned quickly to look for the plane. **[196]**

The scarlet sky bird was limping toward the safety of the higher altitudes, its under-carriage twisted into a grotesque knot.

"What happened?" cried Tom as he stared aghast at 'Speed' Rand's damaged plane. "Did we get hit?"

"Nothing wrong with the *Liberty*," announced Jim Preston. "I don't know what happened."

Helen glanced at the speedboat's wake where a heavy wave was being rolled up by the powerful propeller.

"I know what happened," she cried. "'Rand' was just trying to give us an extra Fourth of July thrill and he forgot about the heavy wave the *Liberty* pulls. He must have banged his landing gear into it."

"You're right, Helen," agreed Tom. "But I can't figure out why he didn't nose over and dive to the bottom of the lake."

"I expect that would have happened to any flyer except Rand," said Helen. "He's supposed to be a wizard in the air."

"Wonder how this accident will affect the crowd at Sandy Point. Think it will keep them from riding with the air circus?" Margaret asked. **[197]**

“Depends on how widely the story gets out,” said Tom. “I’d hate to have Old Man Provost’s celebration ruined by wild rumors. He’s spent a lot of money getting ready to give the public a good time.”

Helen had been watching the progress of Rand’s plane. Instead of heading back toward Sandy Point he was crossing the lake to the east side.

“He’s not going back to Sandy Point,” Helen cried. “Look, he’s going to land on the east side back in the hills.”

“Then he’ll leave the plane there and no one at Sandy Point will know anything about the accident,” exclaimed Tom. “That means we’re the only ones who know.”

Helen was thinking rapidly. Here was just the chance she needed to get hold of Rand and ask him about his world trip. She might be able to make a trade with him. It was worth a try. She leaned forward and spoke to the boatman.

“Will you swing over east, land and pick up the pilot of that plane?” she asked Jim Preston.

Tom, divining the motive back of Helen’s request, added, “We’ll pay for the extra time.”

The boatman agreed and the nose of the *Liberty* was soon cleaving a white-crested path for the east shore. The scarlet plane had disappeared but from the drone of the motor they knew it was somewhere in the hills back from the lakeshore. **[198]**

Jim Preston let the *Liberty* drift to an easy landing alongside a rocky outcropping and Tom, Helen and Margaret hopped out.

“We won’t be gone long,” they promised.

Back through the sparse timber along the lake shore they hurried and out into a long, narrow meadow. The scene that greeted them held them spellbound for a moment. Then they raced toward the far end of the pasture.

“Speed” Rand had landed the damaged plane in a fence.

Tom was the first to reach the wrecked craft. He expected to find the famous flyer half dead in the wreckage. Instead, he was greeted by a debonair young fellow who crawled from beneath one wing where he had been tossed by the impact when the plane struck the fence.

“My gosh,” exclaimed Tom, “aren’t you hurt?”

“Sorry,” smiled Rand, “but I’ll have to disappoint you. I haven’t anything more than a few bruises.”

Helen and Margaret arrived so out of breath they were speechless. **[199]**

Rand bowed slightly. Then his eyes glowed with recognition.

“Hello,” he said. “Aren’t you the folks in the speedboat?”

“We sure were,” Tom said. “You scared us half to death.”

“I scared myself,” admitted Rand, his blue eyes reflecting the laughter on his lips. “It’s been so long since I’ve been in a speedboat I’d forgotten all about the big wake one of those babies pull. I’m just lucky not to be at the bottom of the lake.”

“You’re really ‘Speed’ Rand, aren’t you?” asked Margaret.

He smiled and nodded and Margaret decided she had never seen a more likable young man. His hair was brown and curly and his face was bronzed by the sun of many continents.

“If you’ve got your boat around here, suppose you give me a lift back to Sandy Point,” suggested Rand.

“We’ll be glad to,” Helen replied. “I don’t suppose you’ll want it broadcast about the accident this morning on the lake and your cracking up in a fence over here?”

“What are you driving at? Trying to hi-jack me into paying you to keep quiet?” The last words were short and angry and his eyes hardened. **[200]**

“Nothing like that,” explained Tom quickly. “We know that broadcasting news of an accident to ‘Speed’ Rand will hurt Old Man Provost and his celebration.”

“Then what do you want?” Rand insisted.

“We want to know whether there is anything to the rumor that you’re considering a non-stop refueling flight around the world,” said Helen.

Rand stopped and stared at the young editor of the *Herald* in open amazement.

“Great heavens,” he exclaimed. “You sound like a newspaper reporter.”

“I am,” replied Helen. “I’m the editor of the *Rolfe Herald* and also correspondent for the Associated Press.”

“And you want a story from me about my world flight in return for keeping quiet about the accident.”

“You can call it that,” admitted Helen.

They had reached the shore of the lake and Rand did not answer until they were in the *Liberty* and Jim Preston had the craft headed for Sandy Point.

“Suppose I deny the rumor,” said Rand. **[201]**

“You’ve already admitted it,” Helen replied.

“I have?” he laughed. “How?”

“Less than five minutes ago you said ‘And you want a story about my world flight in return for keeping quiet about the accident?’ That certainly indicates that you are seriously considering such a project.”

Rand laughed and shook his head.

“I guess I might as well give in,” he chuckled. “I’ve been questioned in every city I’ve been in and so far I’ve managed to evade confirming the rumor but it looks like you’ve got me in a corner.

If I don't tell you, will you still spread the story about the accident?"

"No," replied Helen quickly. "Mr. Provost has too much at stake to risk ruining his celebration. It was foolish on your part to take the risk you did and we're trusting that there won't be any more such risks taken by the air circus while it is here."

"You're right. There won't be," said Rand firmly, "and I've learned a lesson myself."

"You're actually planning the world flight?" asked Tom, who wanted to get Rand back on the subject of Helen's assignment.

"I can't get away from you," smiled the flyer, "so I might as well give you all of the details. Got some copypaper?" **[202]**

Helen fished a pad of paper and a pencil from a pocket and handed them to Rand.

"If you don't mind," he explained, "I'll jot down the principal names of the foreign towns where I'll make the refueling contacts. Some of them have queer names and it will help you keep them straight."

The flyer drew a rough sketch of the world, outlining the continents of the northern hemisphere. He located New York on the map and then drew a dotted line extending eastward across the North Atlantic, over Great Britain, Germany, Russia, Siberia, a corner of China, out over the Kamchatka peninsula, across the Bering Sea, over Alaska and then almost a straight line back to New York.

"This is my proposed route," he explained, "covering some 15,000 miles. It will take about four days if I have good luck and am not forced down."

"But I thought the distance around the world was 25,000 miles," said Margaret.

"That's the circumference at the equator," smiled Rand, "but I'm going to make the trip well up in the northern latitudes. In fact, I'll be pretty close to the Arctic circle part of the time." **[203]**

Rand bent over his makeshift map again, marking in the names of the cities where he intended to refuel while in flight.

"When will you take off from New York?" Helen asked.

"In about two weeks," replied Rand without looking up from the map.

Helen gasped. This, indeed, was news. Every paper in the land would carry it on the front page.

"What kind of a plane do you intend to use?" Tom wanted to know.

"I'm having one built to order," said the flyer. "It's a special monoplane the Skycraft Company is testing now at their factory in Pennsylvania. I had a telegram yesterday saying the plane would be ready the first of next week so when I leave Sandy Point I'll go directly to Pennsylvania to get the plane and make the final tests myself.

The air circus will finish its summer tour alone."

Before they reached the landing at Sandy Point, Rand explained how he intended to refuel while in flight, gave Helen the name of his mechanic and described details of the plane.

When they touched the landing at Sandy Point a heavyset man dressed in brown coveralls jumped into the boat. **[204]**

"What in heaven's name happened?" he asked Rand excitedly.

"I flew too close to this motor boat," said the flyer, "and damaged my landing gear on the wave it was pulling. Instead of coming back here to crack up I went across the lake and landed in a meadow. These young people followed and brought me back. I banged the ship up considerable and in return for keeping them quiet, I gave them the story about my world flight. They're newspaper folks."

The heavy man stared at Helen, Tom and Margaret.

"Well, I guess it had to come out some time," he admitted and Rand introduced him as Tiny Adams, his manager of the air circus.

"Tiny runs the show when I go gallivanting around on some fool stunt," explained Rand.

Even at that early hour the crowd was gathering at Sandy Point. Motor boats were whisking down the lake from Rolfe and the beautiful beach was thick with bathers in for a morning dip in the clear waters of the lake.

They hurried off the boat dock and pushed their way through the crowd along the lake shore. **[205]**

"I'm going to the hotel and telephone my story to the Associated Press," said Helen. "And thanks so much, Mr. Rand, for confirming it."

"That's all right," grinned the famous flyer. "I guess you youngsters deserve the break. You certainly were after the news and I appreciate you're keeping quiet about my accident."

"We'll have to print it in our weekly," warned Tom.

"Oh, that's all right," said Rand. "The celebration will be over long before your paper comes out. See you at the field later," he added as he hurried away, followed by the manager of the air circus.

Helen stood for a moment looking after the tall flyer as he edged his way through the ever-increasing crowd.

"Isn't he handsome?" sighed Margaret.

"What a story," commented Tom.

"Let's get going," said Helen, and she started for the hotel.

They reached the rambling old hotel which overlooked the lake and were met at the door by Art Provost, the manager of the resort.

"Glad to see you down so early," he said as he welcomed them. **[206]**

“We thought we’d get here before the crowd,” Tom said, “but from the looks of the young mob down at the beach now they must have started coming in about sundown last night.”

“They did,” chuckled Mr. Provost. “Looks like the greatest celebration in the history of Lake Dubar. It’s the air circus that’s drawing them in and I hope there are no accidents.”

Helen glanced at Tom, warning her brother not to reply.

“I’ve met ‘Speed’ Rand,” she said, “and I think you’ll find him a careful flyer. I’m sure he’ll insist on every possible precaution.”

They went into the lobby of the hotel and Helen entered the telephone booth. She started to put in a long distance call for the Associated Press, then changed her mind and returned to where Tom and Margaret were waiting.

“I’m so nervous I’m afraid I won’t be able to talk,” she said. “Feel my hands.”

Tom and Margaret did as Helen directed. They found her hands clammy with perspiration.

“I think I’ll sit down and write the story and telegraph it,” said Helen.

“You’ll do nothing of the kind,” insisted Tom. “Here, I’ll put the call through and you just repeat what Rand told you. They’ll write the story at the Cranston bureau.” **[207]**

Helen nodded in agreement and Tom bolted into the telephone booth, got the long distance operator at Rolfe and put in a collect call for the Cranston bureau of the Associated Press.

Two minutes later Tom announced that the A.P. was on the line. Helen entered the booth and took the receiver. Tom pulled the door shut and Helen was closeted with her big story in the tiny room, the mouthpiece before her connecting her with the bureau where they were waiting for the story.

“Is Mr. McClintock in the office?” she asked.

“He’s busy,” replied the voice. “I’ll take the message.”

“Tell Mr. McClintock that Helen Blair is calling about the Rand story,” she insisted.

She heard the connection switch and the chief of the Cranston bureau snapped a question at her.

“What’s the matter?” he asked. “Rand give you the usual denial?”

The sharpness of the words nettled Helen.

“No he didn’t,” she replied. “He gave me the whole story. He’ll leave New York within the next two weeks on a non-stop refueling flight around the world.” **[208]**

“What!” shouted the A.P. chief.

Helen repeated her statement.

“You’ve got the biggest story in days,” gasped McClintock. “Have you got plenty of substantiation in case he tries to deny it later.”

"Two witnesses," replied Helen, "and a map of his route which he drew and signed for me."

"That's enough. Let's go. Give me everything he told you. Spell the names of his foreign refueling points slowly. I'll take it directly on a typewriter and we'll start the bulletins out on the main news wires."

The first excitement of the story worn off, Helen found herself exceedingly calm. In short, clear sentences she related for McClintock all of the information "Speed" Rand had given her.

"Send me the map he drew by the first mail," the A.P. correspondent instructed. "It will make a great feature story. Thanks a lot, Miss Blair. You're a real newspaperwoman."

[209]

CHAPTER XIV
The Queen's Last Trip

When Helen left the close confines of the telephone booth after completing her call to the Associated Press she suddenly felt very weak and tired.

"What's the matter?" Tom asked.

"I feel just a little faint," confessed Helen. "Guess the excitement of getting the story and sending it in was a little too much."

"Take my arm," her brother commanded. "We'll go back to the restaurant and get a glass of milk and a sandwich and you'll feel all right in a few minutes."

The food restored Helen's strength and in less than half an hour she was her old self, ready to enjoy the Fourth of July celebration.

[210]

Every boat from Rolfe increased the size of the crowd at Sandy Point. The speedboats dashed down the lake carrying their capacity of passengers, turned and sped back to the town for another load. The *Queen* sedately churned its way through the lake, its double decks jammed with humanity. As they stood on the beach Helen wondered if the old lake boat would come through the day without a mishap. Almost any small accident could throw the passengers into a panic and the capsizing of the *Queen* might follow if they rushed to one side of the flat-bottomed old craft.

The *Queen* sidled up to the big pier at Sandy Beach and Capt. Billy Tucker stuck his white head out of a window in the pilot house and watched his passengers rush for the beach.

"He's in his glory on a day like this," Tom said, "but it's probably the last year for the *Queen*. The boat inspectors won't dare pass the old tub next year no matter how much they like Captain Billy."

"What will he do if they don't license the *Queen*?" asked Margaret.

“Oh, he’ll get along all right,” said Tom. “Captain Billy has plenty salted away. It’s just that he loves the lake and the *Queen*.”

The planes of the air circus were wheeling overhead and they left the beach and started for the air field. The attractions along the midway were gathering their share of the crowd and the mechanical band on the merry-go-round blared with great gusto. The ferris wheel was swinging cars loaded with celebrators into the tree-tops and the whip and other thrill rides were crowded.

Beyond the midway was the large pasture which had been turned into a landing field. A sturdy wire fence had been thrown across the side toward the summer resort and it was necessary to have a pass or ticket to get through the gate. **[211]**

Two small stunt planes were taking off when the members of the *Herald* staff arrived and the three large cabin planes were being filled with passengers. Two of the planes carried eight passengers apiece while the largest, a tri-motor, could accommodate 12. They were sturdy, comfortable looking craft and Helen noticed that they appeared to be in the best possible condition.

They presented their passes at the gate and were admitted to the field.

“Speed” Rand, hurrying along toward the largest plane, caught sight of them.

“Want to ride?” he called.

The answer was unanimous and affirmative.

A minute later they were seated in the 12-passenger plane in comfortable wicker chairs. The door was closed, the motors roared, they bumped over the pasture and then floated away on magic wings.

The ground dropped away from them; the resort and the lake were miniatures bordered by the rich, green lands of the valley and at the far end of the lake, Rolfe, a handful of houses, basked. **[212]**

It was glorious, thrilling, and Helen enjoyed every minute. They swung over the lake where the speedboats were cutting white swaths through the water. They did not cross to the east side and Helen guessed that the pilots were afraid some passenger with unusually keen eyes might detect the remains of the plane Rand had damaged that morning.

Then the trip was over. They drifted down to the field, the motor idling as they lost altitude. Helen sat absolutely rigid for a few seconds, wondering if the plane would land all right. The motors roared again, the nose came up and they settled to earth with little more than a bump.

Rand greeted them when they stepped out of the plane.

“Like it?” he inquired.

“You bet,” said Tom enthusiastically. “Biggest thrill I ever had.”

“How about you?” Rand asked Helen.

“I loved every minute until we started to come down,” she smiled. “Then I wondered where we were going to stop and how, but everything came out all right and I really did enjoy it.”

“Get your story in to the A.P.?” asked the flyer. **[213]**

“Just as soon as I could reach a telephone,” Helen replied. “The bureau chief appeared pleased.”

“He should be,” chuckled Rand. “It seems like every place I’ve gone for the last month there’s been a reporter waiting to ask me questions about my world flight. Honestly, it got so I used to look under the bed at night for fear I might talk in my sleep and wake up in the morning to find a reporter had been hidden in my room.”

Another flyer called Rand and the famous aviator slipped away through the crowd. It was the last they were to see of him and they turned and went back to the attractions of the midway.

They tried every ride, the merry-go-round and the ferris wheel, roller skated, went bathing, listened to the band concert, munched hot dogs at irregular intervals and wound up the afternoon almost exhausted and ready to start for home. So were some other hundreds of people and they found it impossible to get a place in one of the speedboats.

The *Queen* puffed majestically at her pier and **[214]**
Capt. Billy Tucker pulled twice on the whistle cord. Two long, mellow blasts echoed over the lake. The *Queen* would leave for Rolfe in five minutes.

“Looks like we’ll have to take the *Queen* if we want to get home in any reasonable time,” said Margaret.

Tom looked at the throngs waiting for the boats.

“You’re right,” he agreed. “We won’t be able to get on one of the fast boats for at least two hours and I’m getting hungry. I saw mother putting some pie away in the ice box last night and there’ll be plenty of cold milk at home.”

“Don’t,” protested Helen, “I’m so hungry now I’m hollow.”

“Then let’s take the *Queen*,” urged Margaret.

They bought their tickets and hurried onto the main deck of the old lake boat.

“It will be cooler on top,” said Helen and they went up the broad stairs to the upper deck. Perched on this deck was the pilot house where Captain Billy ruled.

He saw them and motioned them to join him.

“Have a big celebration?” he asked when they entered the pilot house.

“Finest ever,” said Margaret, “but we’re ready to call it a day and start home.”

“Better set down on those benches,” said **[215]**
Captain Billy, motioning toward the leather-cushioned lockers which lined the walls of the pilot house.

The veteran lake skipper leaned out of the pilot house, watching the crowd on the beach. The electric lights flashed on as twilight draped its purple mantle over the lake and the whole scene was subdued. The cries from the bathers were not as sharp, the music from the midway seemed to have lost some of its sharpness and the whole crowd of holiday celebrators relaxed with the coming of night.

Captain Billy glanced at his watch.

“Two minutes,” he said, half to himself as he reached for the whistle cord. Again the mellow whistle of the *Queen* rang out and belated excursionists hastened aboard.

The ticket seller at the pier head sounded his final warning bell, and there was the last minute rush across the stubby gang plank. Captain Billy signalled the engine room, bells rang in the depths of the boat and the easy chouf-chouf of the twin stacks deepened as the engines took up their work and the *Queen* backed slowly away from the pier.

Two men who had tarried at the midway too long ran down the pier and yelled at Captain Billy. The skipper picked up his megaphone. **[216]**

“Sorry, too late,” he shouted. “We’ll be back in two hours.”

“Gosh-dinged idiots,” he grumbled to himself. “Here I wait as long as I can and then they expect me to put back in shore. Not me, by Joe, when I’ve got to make connections with one of them excursion trains.”

“Have lots of business today?” asked Tom.

“Biggest day in the twenty odd years I’ve had the *Queen* on the lake,” he chuckled. “The old girl is about on her last legs but this season looks like the best of all. If the paved road goes through they’ll all come in cars and the railroad and the *Queen* will be out of luck.”

“But you’re not objecting to the paved road, are you?” asked Helen.

“Course not,” he replied. “It’s progress and you can’t stop it.”

The *Queen*, ablaze with lights, churned steadily up the lake and the electrics along the beach at Sandy Point faded into a string of dots. Speed boats, showing their red and green riding lights, raced past in smothers of foam but the *Queen* rocked only slightly as they passed and continued steadily on her way.

The band on the after part of the top deck played slower, softer melodies and the whole scene was one of calm and quiet, a fitting end for a great celebration. **[217]**

Of all the people on the *Queen*, only Captain Billy in the pilot house and the crew in the black depths of the engine room were alive to the dangers of the night. They knew how anything unusual and startling might cause a panic which would capsize the *Queen* or how careless navigation on the part of Captain Billy might shove the *Queen* onto one of the jagged ledges of rock which were hazards to navigation in certain parts of the lake. But the *Queen* passed

safely through the rock-strewn sections of the lake and Captain Billy relaxed as the lights of Rolfe came into view.

The *Queen* was less than half a mile from her pier when the unexpected happened. A speed boat, without lights, loomed out of the night.

Screams echoed from the lower deck. Before Captain Billy could twirl his wheel and shift the blunt nose of the *Queen*, the speed boat knifed into the bow of the old steamer.

There was the crash of splintering wood, and muffled cries from the men and women in the smaller boat.

Captain Billy knew the danger even before the boats met. The crash of the collision was still in their ears when he called to Tom. **[218]**

“Take the wheel,” he cried, “and keep the *Queen* headed for the beach. Don’t change the course.”

Then he leaned over the speaking tube to the engine room.

“Captain Billy speaking,” he shouted. “A speed boat just hit us. Full speed ahead until we ground on the sandy beach.”

They could feel the *Queen* trembling as the crowd on the lower deck rushed forward toward the scene of the accident.

“The fools, the fools,” muttered Captain Billy as he ran from the pilot house.

The leader of the band ran forward.

“Get back and play,” ordered the captain. “Play anything loud.”

A deck hand, racing up from below, met Captain Billy at the head of the stairs.

“They knocked a hole clear through us,” he gasped. “We’re taking water fast.”

“Shut up,” snapped the captain. “Stay here and don’t let anyone off the upper deck.”

The young people in the pilot house saw Captain Billy rush down the stairs and they looked at one another in open amazement.

“He’s every inch a skipper,” said Tom as he clung to the wheel of the *Queen*. **[219]**

“I hope he pulls us through,” said Margaret, staring at the lights of Rolfe. A minute ago they had seemed so close; now they were so far away, the longest half mile any of them would ever know.

“He’ll get us there if it is humanly possible,” Helen said hopefully.

The crowd on the upper deck milled excitedly but the deck hand forced them back from the stairway and the steady playing of the band and continued forward movement of the *Queen* seemed to allay their worst fears.

Sparks rolled from the twin funnels as the engines labored to the utmost but Tom, his hands on the sensitive wheel, knew that the speed was decreasing. The *Queen* was harder to

handle, the bow was settling lower in the water but less than a quarter of a mile remained. He reached up and pulled the whistle cord. Three short, sharp blasts shattered the night. Three more and then three more. It was the signal for help but he wondered how many would be in Rolfe to answer the call.

"How deep is the water from here in?" asked Helen.

"About twenty feet," replied her brother. "Better slip on those life preservers and get ready to jump. We're taking water fast." **[220]**

"There are several hundred in the lockers here," said Helen. "I'm going to pass them out to the people on deck."

"It will only alarm them," said Tom.

"But they've got to have a chance if we go under," replied Helen and with Margaret to help her, she hurled scores of life preservers out of the pilot house onto the deck.

The passengers had lost their first panic. They knew the *Queen* was making a valiant fight to reach shore but the tenseness, the grimness of the crew told them it was going to be close. In the emergency they used their heads and put on the life preservers as fast as Helen and Margaret could pull them from the lockers.

The lights of Rolfe were agonizingly close. Less than six hundred feet separated them from the safety of the sandy shore. On the upper deck the passengers were quiet, ready for the crisis.

Tom leaned close to the speaking tube. The chief engineer was talking.

"What's he saying?" Helen demanded.

"Water's in the engine room," replied her brother. "The fires under the boiler will be out in another minute or two. Then blewy!" **[221]**

"Isn't there enough steam to make shore?" asked Margaret desperately, for after her experience on the lake earlier in the summer she had a very real fear of Dubar at night.

"All we can do is hope," replied Tom. "They'll keep the engines turning over as long as there is any steam left."

The warning from the whistle was bringing people from town and they were gathering under the electrics along the beach. Helen wondered if they knew that death was riding on the bow of the *Queen*, that tragedy was waiting to swoop down on the old boat and its load of excursionists.

The *Queen* staggered, wabbled dangerously, and the wheel jerked out of Tom's hands. He grabbed the spokes and held the bow steady as the *Queen* stumbled ahead. They could see the faces of the people on the beach now, saw the look of horror that spread over them as they saw the stove-in bow of the *Queen*. There were only two hundred feet to go but they were still in deep water.

The voice from the speaking tube rolled into the pilot house.

"Steam's gone!"

[222]

On the echo of the words the steady beat of the engines slowed and it was only by clinging to the wheel with all of his strength that Tom held the *Queen* in to shore.

The bow was almost even with the water now. They seemed to be plowing their way into the depths of the lake. Then the bow lifted and grated on the sand. The momentum carried the *Queen* forward, shivering and protesting at every foot it was driven into the beach.

There was a wild scramble on the main deck, cries of relief and happiness as passengers by the score jumped into the knee deep water and ran for shore. The men, women and children on the upper deck hurried down the stairs while through it all the band kept up its steady blare, the crash of brass on brass and the constant thump, thump of the bass drum.

The danger past, Tom stepped back from the wheel. His arms felt as though they had been almost pulled from their sockets, so great had been the strain of holding the *Queen* on its course.

[223]

Helen and Margaret stripped off their life preservers and went down to the main deck with Tom. There they found Captain Billy and the crew of the *Queen* gathered at the bow of the boat. A great hole had been torn in the old steamer's hull by the speed boat and Tom marveled that they had been able to make shore.

"Why didn't we sink out in the lake?" he asked Captain Billy.

"Guess we might have," smiled the captain, "but we managed to hold the speed boat in the hole it had made until we were most to shore. Otherwise we'd have filled and gone down inside a couple of minutes after they hit us."

A decidedly sheepish young man broke through the group and faced Captain Billy.

"I'm the owner of the boat that hit you," he explained. "We were going to see how close we could come and one of the girls in the boat tickled me and I swung the wheel the wrong way."

"You almost swung about four hundred people into the lake," Captain Billy reminded him tartly.

"I'm terribly sorry," replied the owner of the speed boat, "and I'm decidedly grateful to you for fishing us out of it after we hit you. I'm Maxfield Hooker of Cranston and I'll be glad to pay for all of the damage to your boat."

"We'll talk about that later," said Captain Billy. "I've got to see that those excursionists all make their trains."

[224]

"Did you get that?" said Tom as he nudged Helen. "Maxfield Hooker of Cranston, son of the multi-millionaire soap manufacturer. Captain Billy can have a new *Queen* if he wants one."

"My guess is that he won't want one," said Helen. "After all, the *Queen* has had a long and useful career and she certainly proved herself in the emergency tonight."

Captain Billy made sure that all of the excursionists were safely off the boat and that done, he came back to where Tom, Helen and Margaret were standing.

“I’ve a great deal to be thankful for,” he told them. “It was only through the nerve and calmness of the crew and such as you three that the *Queen* pulled through. Tom, I’m eternally grateful to you for sticking in the pilot house and to you girls for having the presence of mind to pass out the life preservers.”

Before they could reply Captain Billy turned and hastened up to the pilot house. Tom started to follow but Helen stopped him.

“Don’t go,” she said. “He wants to say good-bye to the *Queen*.”

[225]

CHAPTER XV
Success Attends

Later that night the *Queen* caught fire and burned to the water’s edge. Some said that Captain Billy, saddened by the tragedy which had almost befallen the majestic old craft, had set the fire himself but none ever knew definitely.

Helen telephoned the story of Captain Billy and the burning of the *Queen* to the *Associated Press* at Cranston and found the night editor there anxious for the story.

“Great human interest stuff,” he said as he hung up.

The Blairs and Stevens watched the burning of the *Queen* from the knoll on which the Blair home was situated and later they saw the shower of fireworks set off at Crescent Beach, far down the lake. It was well after midnight when they finally called it a day, one which would long be remembered by Tom and Helen Blair and Margaret Stevens.

The second day of the celebration, Sunday, they rested quietly at home and planned for the coming week.

With the Monday morning mail came the papers from Cranston, a letter from McClintock of the *Associated Press* and new thrills for Helen. **[226]**

The Cranston papers blazoned her story of “Speed” Rand’s plans to circle the globe in a nonstop refueling flight on the front page and the big surprise was the first line which read: “By Helen Blair, Special Correspondent of the Associated Press, Copyright 1932 (All Rights Reserved).”

Helen gazed at the story in frank awe and amazement. She knew it was a highly important story, but to get a by-line with the Associated Press was an honor she scarcely had dared dream about.

The letter from McClintock commended her further for her work, promised that her monthly check would be a liberal one and added that when she finished high school he would be glad to consider her for a job with the Associated Press.

Helen sat down and wrote a long letter to her father, telling in detail the events of the Fourth and enclosing the Associated Press story and her letter from McClintock. That done, she turned to the task of writing her stories for the *Weekly Herald*. Tom was out soliciting ads, Margaret had gone down the lake to check up at both summer resorts about possible accidents and she had the office to herself that morning.

Which story should Helen write first, "Speed" Rand's world flight, the celebration at Sandy Point or the story of Captain Billy and the *Queen*? She threaded a sheet of copy paper into her typewriter and sought inspiration in a blank gaze at the ceiling. Inspiration failed to come from that source and she scrawled aimlessly with pencil and paper, her mind mulling over the myriad facts of her stories. Then she started typing. Her first story concerned Captain Billy and the *Queen*, for Captain Billy and his ancient craft were known to every reader of the *Herald*. They were home news. "Speed" Rand and his plans concerned the outside world. **[227]**

The events of the night of the Fourth were indelibly printed in Helen's mind and the copy rolled from her typewriter, two, four, six, ten pages. She stopped long enough to delve into the files and find the story which the *Herald* had printed 23 years before when the *Queen* made her maiden trip on Lake Dubar. Two more pages of copy rolled from her machine.

Helen picked up the typed pages, 12 altogether. She hadn't intended to make the story that long but it had written itself, it was one of those stories in which danger and heroism combine to make the human-interest that all newspaper readers enjoy. **[228]**

With the story of Captain Billy and the *Queen* out of the way, Helen wrote a short lead about "Speed" Rand and then clipped the rest of the story for the *Herald* from the one she had telephoned the Associated Press. Even then it would run more than a column and with a long story on the general Fourth of July celebration she felt that the *Herald* would indeed give its subscribers their money's worth of news that week.

There was a slight let-down in advertising the week following the Fourth but they crammed the six home-printed pages of the *Herald* full of news and went to press early Thursday, for it was election day and the fate of the paved road program was at stake. For the last month Helen had written editorials urging the improvement of the roads and they went directly from the office Thursday afternoon to the polling place to remain there until the last ballot had been counted. The vote was heavy and Rolfe favored the good roads 452 to 73.

Doctor Stevens, who announced the vote to the anxious crowd, added, "And I think we can thank Helen Blair, our young editor of the *Herald*, for showing us the value of better roads." **[229]**

There was hearty applause and calls for speech, but Helen refused to talk, hurrying away to telephone the Rolfe vote to the Associated Press. The morning papers announced that the program had carried in the state as a whole and that paving would start at once with Rolfe assured of being on the scenic highway not later than the next summer.

News from their father in Arizona continued cheering and as their own bank account increased steadily and circulation mounted, Tom and Helen felt that they were making a success of their management of the *Herald*.

The remainder of July passed rapidly and the hot blasts of August winds seared the valley of Lake Dubar. The only refreshing thing was the night breeze from the lake which cooled the heat-baked town and afforded some relief. Then came the cooler days of September and the return to school.

Superintendent Fowler arrived a week before the opening of the fall term and Tom and Helen arranged to attend part time, yet carry full work. Helen also worked out plans for a school page, news of every grade to be written by some student especially designated as a reporter for the "*School Herald*."

Tom and Helen had so systematized their work that the task of getting out the paper was reduced to a minimum. With Margaret willing to help whenever needed, they felt sure they could continue the successful operation of the *Herald*. **[230]**

Every spare hour Helen devoted to building up the circulation list and by early October they had added 400 new subscribers, which gave the *Herald* a total of 1,272 in the county and every one paid up.

"Gosh, I never thought we could get that many," said Tom as he checked over the circulation records. "Now I'm sure we'll be named one of the official county papers. What a surprise that will be for Dad."

"I thought you said we'd have a lot of trouble with Burr Atwell, editor of the *Advocate* at Auburn," chided Helen as she recalled her brother's dire statements of what the fiery editor of the Auburn paper would do when he found the *Herald* was trying to take the county printing away from him.

"We've just been lucky so far," replied Tom. "Atwell will wake up one of these days and then we'll have plenty of trouble. He won't fight fair." **[231]**

"Let's not borrow trouble until it arrives," Helen smiled.

Organization of the high school classes and election of officers followed the opening of school and Helen found herself president of the juniors while Tom was named secretary and treasurer of the seniors.

"I'm mighty proud of both of you," said Mrs. Blair when they told her the news that night at dinner. "It is no more than you deserve but I hope it won't be too much of a burden added to your work on the paper."

“It won’t take much time,” Tom assured her, “and since Marg Stevens is vice president of the juniors Helen can turn a lot of the work over to her.”

They were still at the dinner table when a heavy knock at the front door startled them. Tom answered the summons and they heard him talking with someone with an exceedingly harsh voice. When Tom returned he was accompanied by a stranger.

“Mother,” he said, “this is Mr. Atwell, editor of the *Auburn Advocate*.”

Mrs. Blair acknowledged the introduction and Tom introduced the visiting editor to Helen. Mr. Atwell sat down heavily in a chair Tom offered. **[232]**

“I suppose you know why I’m here?” he asked.

“I’m afraid not,” replied Mrs. Blair.

“It’s about the *Herald* and the circulation tactics of these young whipper-snappers of yours. I hear they’re trying to take the county printing away from me and become one of the official papers of the county.”

“Who informed you of that?” asked Helen, who had taken an instant dislike to the pudgy visitor whose flabby cheeks were covered with a heavy stubble of whiskers.

“Folks have been talking,” he replied.

“When you want information like that you’d better come to those concerned,” retorted the energetic young editor of the *Herald*.

“That’s just what I’m a-doing,” he replied. “Are you?”

“Are we what?” interposed Tom.

“Are you trying to be a county paper?” snorted Atwell.

“Yes,” replied Helen, “we are. This section of the county doesn’t have an official weekly and the people here want one.”

“You’re trying to rob me of my bread and butter for your own selfish ends,” stormed the visitor. **[233]**

“We’re not trying to rob anybody,” replied Tom. “Get this straight. We’ve as much if not more right to be a county weekly than you have. All we have to say is be sure your records are correct when the supervisors meet in December. Now get out of here!”

Atwell rose slowly, his heavy features suffused with anger and his hands shaking.

“I serve notice on you,” he stormed, “that you’ll never win out.” He stomped from the room, slamming the front door as he went.

Mrs. Blair looked at Tom and Helen.

“Don’t you think you were a little short with him?” she asked.

“Perhaps,” admitted Helen, “but he can’t tell us what to do.”

“In that,” smiled her mother, “you take after

your father."

They refused to let the warning from the editor of the Auburn paper dim their hopes or retard their efforts. Circulation mounted steadily until by mid-November it had reached an even 1,400.

Tom continued his weekly trips to Gladbrook to get the county farm news and to solicit advertising. From one of these trips he returned jubilant. **[234]**

"I've been talking with the supervisors," he said, "and they're all in favor of naming the *Herald* the third official paper instead of the *Advocate*. One of them suggested that we get an auditor from Cranston to go over our circulation list and officially audit it and then have him with us when we appear before the board."

"But wouldn't that cost a lot of money?"

"Probably $50 but having an audited list will practically insure us of getting the county work. Also, I'm going to take our subscription records and list over to the bank and keep them there until we need them every Thursday."

"Why, what's the matter, Tom?"

"I heard some talk in the courthouse that Atwell had been boasting he'd get even with us and I'm not going to take any chances with the records."

With characteristic determination Tom made the transfer that afternoon and it was only mid-evening of the same day when the fire siren sounded its alarm.

All of the Blairs hurried outside where, from the front porch of their home, they could look down main street.

"The truck is stopping in front of the *Herald* office!" gasped Helen. **[235]**

Without a word Tom plunged down the hill, running full speed for the office. Helen and her mother followed as quickly as possible.

Main street rapidly filled with excited townspeople and they caught the odor of burning wood as they neared the *Herald* building. Margaret Stevens ran up to them.

"It doesn't look bad," she tried to reassure them, "and the firemen have it under control."

Helen was so weak from the shock of the fire that she clung to Margaret and her mother for support. Her head reeled as picture thoughts raced through her mind. The threats of Burr Atwell, all of their months of hard work, the expense of the fire, their father's need for money, Tom's precautions in moving the circulation list.

Then it was over. The firemen dragged their line of hose from the chemical tank back to the street and they crowded into the smoke-filled rooms. The fire had started near the back door but thanks to the night watchman had been detected before it had gained headway. The week's supply of print paper was ruined and the two rooms blackened by smoke and splattered with the chemical used to check the flames, but the press and Linotype were undamaged.

Tom wanted to stay and clean up the office but Mrs. Blair insisted that they all return home, herself instructing the night watchman to hire several town laborers to work the rest of the night cleaning up the office. [236]

“That fire was deliberately set,” raged Tom as they walked home. “The fire chief saved the greasy rags he found in the corner of the composing room where it started. Ten more minutes without discovery and we wouldn’t have had a newspaper.”

“Who could have done such a thing?” protested his mother.

“Burr Atwell,” declared Tom. “The editorial office had been ransacked for the circulation records. It’s a good thing I moved them this afternoon.”

“Can we prove Atwell had a hand in this?”

“I don’t suppose so,” admitted Tom, “but we’ll run a story in this week’s issue that will scare him. We’ll say the fire chief is investigating and may ask for state secret service men to help him run down the fire bug who started it. That ought to give Atwell a queer feeling.”

They telephoned for another supply of print paper for the week’s issue and the next morning were back at the office. The men who had worked through the night had done a good job of cleaning and there was little evidence of fire other than the charred casings of the back door and smudgy condition of the walls and ceiling. [237]

Thanksgiving was brightened by word from their father that he would be able to return home in the spring but despite that it was a sad day in the Blair home for there was none to fill his chair at the head of the table.

“Christmas,” thought Helen, “is going to be terribly lonesome for mother with Dad so far away,” and the more she thought about it the more determined she became. Without saying anything to Tom or her mother, she made several guarded inquiries at the station and elicited the desired information.

The days before the annual meeting of the supervisors passed rapidly. The ground whitened under the first snow of the year and the auditor for whom Tom had arranged in Cranston arrived to audit their circulation list officially. For a week before his arrival Tom and Helen concentrated every effort on their circulation with the result that when the audit was completed the *Herald* could boast of 1,411 paid up subscriptions.

“You’ve done a remarkably fine piece of work,” Curtis Adams, the auditor, told Helen, “and I’m sure you young folks deserve the county work.” [238]

The supervisors met on Thursday, December 15th, and in order to attend the meeting Tom and Helen worked most of Wednesday night getting the final pages of the *Herald* on the press, assembling and folding the papers. It was three o’clock in the morning when they reached home and their mother, who had been sleeping on a davenport awaiting their return, prepared a hot lunch and then sent them to bed.

At nine o'clock Tom teased their venerable flivver into motion and with their records and the auditor in the back seat, they started for Gladbrook. It was well after ten o'clock when they reached the courthouse and they went directly to the supervisors' rooms where a clerk asked them to wait.

Half an hour later they were called and Helen went into the board room with mixed emotions throbbing through her mind. What would be the answer to their months of work? Would they get the county work which meant so much or would Burr Atwell succeed in defeating them?

Her arms ached from the heavy task of folding the papers the night before and she was so nervous she was on the verge of tears. If they won they would be able to buy a folder for the press and she wouldn't have to fold any more papers. That thought alone gave her new courage and she smiled bravely at Tom as he stepped forward and told the supervisors why he believed the *Herald* should be the third county paper. **[239]**

Then Mr. Adams, the auditor, presented his sworn statement of the circulation of the *Herald* and in conclusion, he added:

"I have never seen a sounder or better circulation than these young people have built up. They have made no special offers nor have they reduced rates. People who take the *Herald* do so because it is one of the best weekly papers I have ever seen."

The chairman of the board of supervisors looked expectantly around the room.

"The Gladbrook papers, the *News* and the *Times*, have made their application and the *Herald* has just been heard," he explained. "I expected Mr. Atwell of the *Auburn Advocate* would be here."

The board waited for fifteen minutes. Then there was a whispered conference between members and the chairman stood up. **[240]**

"The selection of official papers has been made," he announced. "*The Gladbrook News*, the *Gladbrook Times* and the *Rolfe Herald* will be known as the official papers for the ensuing year. The meeting is adjourned until afternoon."

The editors of the Gladbrook papers offered Tom and Helen their congratulations and expressed willingness to cooperate in every way.

When they were alone Tom looked at Helen through eyes that were dim.

"We won," he said huskily, "and it's all due to your hard work on circulation."

Helen's eyes were just as misty as she smiled back.

"No," she replied, "it was your hunch in putting the records in the bank. We'd have been ruined if you hadn't. I'm wondering why Mr. Atwell didn't appear."

"I have a hunch he was afraid we had connected him with the fire," said Tom. "Now let's phone mother and then send a wire to Dad."

That afternoon Tom completed the arrangements to publish the official proceedings of the county supervisors and increased the amount of job printing he was to get from the courthouse. He also hired a middle-aged printer who agreed to come to Rolfe and work for $18 a week. [241]

“But isn’t that a little extravagant?” asked Helen.

“We must have help now,” explained Tom, “and with the county printing safely tucked away we can afford it. Also, I bought a second-hand folder from the *Times* here. It only cost me $50 and you’ll never have to fold papers again.”

“Oh, I’m so happy,” exclaimed Helen, “for I did hate to fold them. There were so many along toward the end.”

On the way home that afternoon they made further plans and checked up on their funds in the bank.

“We’ve got a little over $900 right now,” said Tom, “and that’s deducting all of my extravagances of an auditor and buying the second-hand folder. Our bills are all paid and we’re having a record December in advertising. I’d say we were sitting pretty.”

“I was thinking about Christmas,” said Helen.

“It’s going to be mighty lonesome without Dad,” admitted Tom.

“Mother will miss him especially. They’ve never been away from each other at the holidays before.” [242]

Something in Helen’s voice caught Tom’s attention and he glanced at her sharply.

“Say, what the dickens are you driving at?” he asked.

“Give me a check for $200 and I’ll show you,” replied Helen. “It will mean the happiest Christmas we’ve ever had.”

“I’ll do it and no questions asked until you’re ready to tell me,” agreed Tom and when they reached Rolfe he went to the office and signed a check for $200 payable to Helen Blair.

The following Thursday fell on the 22nd of December and there was so much advertising they had to run two sections of the *Herald*. The printer they had hired in Gladbrook was slow but thorough and they got the paper to press on time. With the folder installed, Helen was spared the arduous duties of folding all of the papers and she devoted her time to running the mailing machine.

“Spent that $200 yet?” asked Tom as they walked home through the brisk December evening, snow crunching underfoot.

“All gone,” smiled Helen, “and the big surprise is here in my pocket. Wait until we get home and I tell mother about it.” [243]

“Guess I’ll have to,” grinned Tom.

They found their mother in the kitchen busy with

the evening meal.

“Mother, we’ve got a Christmas surprise for you,” said Helen. “Come in the living room.”

Mrs. Blair looked up quickly.

“That’s thoughtful of you,” she said, “but I hope you didn’t spend too much money.”

Wiping her hands on her apron, she preceded them into the living room.

“Where is it?” she asked.

“Over there on the library table,” replied Helen, pointing to an envelope tied with a band of red ribbon with a sprig of holly on top.

Mrs. Blair picked up the envelope, untied the ribbon and looked inside. She pulled out two objects. One was a long, green strip of paper with many perforations and much printing. The other was a small black book similar to a check book.

She held the long slip with hands that trembled as she read it.

“It’s a round trip ticket to Rubio, Arizona!” she gasped, “Oh, Helen! Tom! How kind of you. Father and I will have Christmas together! And here’s a book of traveler’s checks and Pullman reservations. I’m to leave tomorrow.” **[244]**

Tom gave Helen a hearty hug.

“So that’s where the $200 went,” he whispered. “Are you sure it’s enough?”

“Plenty,” she replied.

Mrs. Blair sat down in her favorite chair, the ticket and check book in her hands, her eyes dim with tears.

“But I can’t go away and leave you two here alone during holidays,” she said.

“Oh yes you can, Mother,” said Tom. “We’ll be happy just knowing that you and Dad are together and you can tell him all about us and then, when you come back, you can tell us all about him.”

“You must go, Mother,” insisted Helen. “I’ve let Dad in on the surprise and we can’t disappoint him now.”

Doctor Stevens drove them to the junction where Mrs. Blair was to board the Southwestern limited. Snow was falling steadily, one of those dry, sifting snows that presage a white Christmas in the middle west.

The limited poked its dark nose through the storm and drew its string of Pullmans up to the bleak platform. It paused for only a minute and the goodbyes were hasty. **[245]**

The limited whirled away into the storm and Tom and Helen, standing alone on the platform, watched it disappear in the snow. It would be a quiet Christmas for them but they were supremely happy knowing that their father was on the road to health and that they had made a success of the *Herald*.

BOOKS for GIRLS

THE MERRIWEATHER GIRLS SERIES
BY LIZETTE EDHOLM

The Merriweather girls, Bet, Shirley, Joy and Kit are four fun-loving chums, who think up something exciting to do every minute. The romantic old Merriweather Manor is where their most thrilling adventures occur. The author has given us four exceptional titles in this series—absorbing mysteries and their solutions, school life, horseback riding, tennis and adventures during their school vacations.

The Merriweather Girls and the Mystery of the Queen's Fan
The Merriweather Girls on Campers Trail
The Merriweather Girls in Quest of Treasure
The Merriweather Girls at Good Old Rock Hill

CAMPFIRE GIRLS SERIES
BY MARGARET PENROSE

These stories take in the activities of several bright girls who become interested in all present day adventures.

Campfire Girls of Roselawn
Campfire Girls on Program
Campfire Girls on Station Island
Campfire Girls at Forest Lodge

EVERYGIRL'S SERIES

Grouped in the Everygirl's Series are five volumes selected for excellence. Shirley Watkins, Caroline E. Jacobs, Ruthe Wheeler and Blanche Elizabeth Wade contribute stories that are both fascinatingly real and touched with romance. Every girl who dips into one of these stories will find herself enthralled to the end.

The S.W.F. Club	Caroline E. Jacobs
Jane Lends a Hand	Shirley Watkins
Nancy of Paradise College	Shirley Watkins
Georgina Finds Herself	Shirley Watkins
Helen in the Editors Chair	Ruthe Wheeler

PEGGY STEWART SERIES
By GABRIELLE E. JACKSON

Peggy Stewart at Home
Peggy Stewart at School

Peggy, Polly, Rosalie, Marjorie, Natalie, Isabel,

Stella and Juno—girls all of high spirits make this Peggy Stewart series one of entrancing interest. Their friendship, formed in a fashionable eastern school, they spend happy years crowded with gay social affairs. The background for these delightful stories is furnished by Annapolis with its naval academy and an aristocratic southern estate.

THE PEGGY STEWART SERIES

By **GABRIELLE E. JACKSON**

Against the colorful background of Annapolis and a picturesque southern estate, Gabrielle E. Jackson paints the human and lovely story of a human and lovely girl. Real girls will revel in this wholesome tale and its enchanting telling.

Peggy Stewart at Home
Peggy Stewart at School

The Motor Girls Series

By **MARGARET PENROSE**

A dashing, fun-loving girl is Cora Kimball and she is surrounded in her gypsy-like adventures with a group of young people that fairly sparkle. Girls who follow their adventurous steps will find a continuing delight in their doings. In the series will be found some absorbing mysteries that will keep the reader guessing so that the element of suspense is added to make the perusal thoroughly enjoyable.

The Motor Girls
On Tour
At Lookout Beach
Through New England
On Cedar Lake
On the Coast
On Crystal Bay
On Waters Blue
At Camp Surprise
In the Mountains

Helen In the Editor's Chair

By **RUTHE S. WHEELER**

"Helen in the Editor's Chair" strikes a new note in stories for girls. Its heroine, Helen Blair, is typical of the strong, self-reliant girl of today. When her father suffers a breakdown and is forced to go to a drier climate to recuperate, Helen and her brother take charge of their father's paper, the *Rolfe Herald*. They are faced with the problem of keeping the paper running profitably and the adventures they encounter in their year on the *Herald* will keep you tingling with excitement from the first page to the last.

RED STAR CLASSICS

Heidi By Johanna Spyri
Treasure Island By Robert Louis Stevenson
Hans Brinker By Mary Mapes Dodge
Gulliver’s Travels By Jonathan Swift
Alice in Wonderland By Lewis Carrol
Pinocchio By Carlo Collodi
The Story of a Bad Boy By Thomas Bailey Aldrich
Kidnapped By Robert Louis Stevenson
Stories from King Arthur Retold
The Little Lame Prince By Miss Mulock

Boys and girls the world over worship these “Classics” of all times, and no youth is complete without their imagination-stirring influence. They are the time-tested favorites loved by generations of young people.

The Goldsmith Publishing Co.
CHICAGO

Transcriber’s Note

- Obvious typographical errors were corrected without changing nonstandard spellings that might have been dialectical.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HELEN IN THE EDITOR'S CHAIR ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT
GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional

cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.