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**THE WOODCRAFT GIRLS  
AT CAMP**

**LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY**

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**WATCHING THE SWALLOW'S FLIGHT.**  
*The Woodcraft Girls at Camp.*  
*Frontispiece.*

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BY  
**LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY**

AUTHOR OF  
THE WOODCRAFT GIRLS IN THE CITY,  
LITTLE WOODCRAFTER'S BOOK,  
THE POLLY BREWSTER BOOKS, ETC.

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Sincere gratitude is tendered Mrs. Frederick Hoisington  
(Atma), of Woodcraft Indians, for valuable suggestions  
and her friendly assistance in  
making this story one of true  
Woodcraft life of the  
beginner.

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# THE WOODCRAFT GIRLS AT CAMP

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## CHAPTER ONE THE CHOSEN LAND

"O oo-ooH! Oo-ooH! Nita!" called Suzanne Baker, as she skipped across the small square of green grass that individualised the brownstone house where Anita Brampton lived.

No answer came, so Zan—as she was always called for short—impatiently repeated the call, adding after a moment's pause, "Where are you—come on out!"

Still no reply, but the pretty face of Mrs. Brampton appeared at the glass door inside the vestibule. She smiled as she recognised the caller and nodded for her to come in.

Zan ran up the steps and said, "How'd do, Mrs. Brampton—where's Nita?"

"Looking for you, most likely," laughed the lady of the house. Then, as her smile changed to a petulant look with the changing of her thought, she added, "Dear me! Nita is a sore trial. Did you ever know her to accomplish anything without confusion to others?"

Zan knew from experience that that aggrieved tone meant a long harangue on Nita's shortcomings, so she hurriedly changed the subject.

"Well, as long as Nita isn't here I guess I'll run along to Miss Miller's. They'll all be there waiting, I s'pose."

"All right, dearie; I have a little bridge party in the library, or I would give more time to you," replied Mrs. Brampton, daintily patting down a few stray wisps of blonde hair that fluttered in the breeze from the open door.

"Oh, I'm in a great hurry, anyway," returned Zan, starting out of the doorway.

At that moment, a maid summoned Mrs. Brampton to the telephone saying that her daughter wished to speak with her.

"Wait a moment, Zan—Nita's on the 'phone and you can speak to her after I see what she wants," said Mrs. Brampton, turning back.

Zan followed to the small nook where the telephone was kept and stood waiting. Laughter and the sound of coins drew her attention to the bridge players in the large library.

Mrs. Brampton finished speaking with her daughter, saying, "Zan is here—wait a second and I'll put her on the wire."

Turning to hand Zan the receiver, she whispered, "When you are through here run to the dining-room and have a glass of wine and cake—it is all ready for my friends."

"Oh, no, thank you, Mrs. Brampton! You know Daddy doesn't approve of us having wine. We always drink water at home," replied Zan, flushing uncomfortably.

"Dear me, I forgot! The doctor is *such* a radical on these little things!" laughed the lady merrily, patting the girl consolingly on the shoulder with much-beringed hands.

She hastened back to her guests while Zan called, "Hello, Nita! Where are you, anyway?"

"Ha, ha ha! We're all at Miss Miller's? Why don't you hurry over, too," came a musical voice over the wire.

"Just because you didn't do as I said! I told you distinctly to wait for me at the school-gates. You knew I'd be a few minutes late on account of seeing my Latin teacher after school. I asked Bob if he had seen you—he was waiting for some boys in front of the gate—but he said you had hurried away with the girls. So I stopped in here thinking you may have gone home."

There was a moment's silence, then a petulant voice, so like Mrs. Brampton's that Zan smiled, said, "Dear me! I'm sure it isn't my fault if you didn't meet us! Why all of the girls should bother to hang around waiting for you, is more than I can tell!"

"Well, seeing that the whole plan is mine, and not one of you girls would have been in on it if I hadn't asked you, it seems mighty ungrateful to act so, that's all I have to say!" and Zan jabbed up the receiver on its hook.

She threw a glance of disapproval at the card players who were quarrelling over the stakes, and hurried out, leaving the maid to close the doors.

A few moments later she was on a cross-town car. Thinking of the house she had just left, with its mistress dressed in silks and sparkling with jewels, she murmured to herself, "Huh! I'd a heap rather have our comfy home with all the boys' marks and scratches on the mission wood than all of the gorgeous damask and gilt of Nita's home! We enjoy our life at home, but gracious! at Nita's it's always, 'Don't touch that, dearie!' or 'Be careful, that vase cost a fortune;' a girl can't even skip over the floor without having Mrs. Brampton cry, 'Oh, mercy! That velour carpet will all be worn out!'"

The conductor, in passing down the aisle heard the girl mutter and stopped to ask her if she spoke to him.

Zan laughed amiably as she looked up at him and said, "No, I was just thinking out loud!"

The man smiled too, and returned to his post while Zan looked out of the window to see what street they were near. Finding that the next corner was the one she wished to reach, she signalled to stop the car.

As she stood on the platform waiting for the car to come to a stop, the kind old conductor said, "Not many young folks think at all, but it is best to do your thinking quiet-like so others don't get a chance to hear your plans. S'pose every inventor did his thinking aloud, what chance would he have to get his patent?"

Zan nodded thoughtfully and thanked the wise old man for the advice. He assisted her to jump down and smiled as he watched her hurry down the side street.

As she went, Zan thought, "That man is a philosopher! I must be careful and not think out loud after this. Thinking is good practice but I guess it all depends on what kind of thinking you do—good—bad—or indifferent!"

With this sage conclusion Zan reached Miss Miller's home. She asked the elevator boy to take her up to Apartment 9, and, as soon as the floor was reached, she bounded out and rang the bell at the side of the door.

Of the five girls about to meet for the forming of a Clan of Woodcraft Indians, no two were alike in character or physique. Zan was of the tom-boy type, fond of athletics and all out-door sport with her two brothers, who were near her own age. Her hands and feet, although being well-shaped, were large and tanned. The finely poised head was crowned with a mass of bronze-red hair that had no hint of wave in its long strands. Energy, endurance, and impatience were expressed in her every movement and expression while sympathy, generosity, and frankness were the attributes that go hand in hand with such a temperament as Zan's. Her parents were most sensible and clothed the girl in comfortable, well-made things of first-class material, but ignored ridiculous styles or customs which might distract an expanding thought from practical affairs and limit it to fashion and self-contemplation. Of course, Zan had never worn stays, tight shoes, or cramping gloves, and was given wholesome food with no indulgence in the kind that impedes digestion or causes fermentation to blood and brain. As a result, the girl possessed a normal, perfectly healthy body, clear eyes, wonderful skin, and looked like fourteen years of age instead of twelve, the last birthday having been celebrated a few weeks previously to the opening of this story. In school, she was in the class of girls where each one registered thirteen and a half to fourteen years of age. And she was generally at the head of her class, at that.

Anita Brampton was the most decided contrast to Zan of all the school-mates. She was just past fourteen but so under-sized and slender that she looked like twelve, albeit, she was most sophisticated in life, and made the most of her dainty prettiness. Her great eyes of blue, so like a wax-doll's, were used to their best advantage, while her graceful little body generally posed effectively. Her pale yellow hair was artificially curled about a pink and white face, not altogether free from some of her mother's powder and rouge. Her hands and feet were too small and the rose-bud mouth too petulant for beauty. But Nita had absolute faith in her perfection. She was most indolent and over-fond of sweets and dancing; in fact, the latter art was indulged to such an extent that it became a crime. She attended every party she could secure an invitation to and, being a graceful dancer always dressed in the latest mode, she never lacked partners. These youths, several years her senior, vied with each other for her daring words and suggestive glances, yet not one of them would care to have her for an intimate friend of his sister's. As a result of wasting the night hours, Nita was delicate, nervous and prematurely blasé, when she should have been most vital and abounding with fine health.

Elena Marsh was a pretty girl with a yearning for the artistic. She was clever with brush and pen and promised to accomplish something worth while if a well-meaning but over-severe mother could be made to see the blight she forced on the girl's ambitions. To Mrs. Marsh, success was found through tiresome ways of practice for hours, when fingers grew to cramped to firmly grasp a pencil. She never realised that inspiration often came from absolute change of occupation. Then too, she was so fearful of fresh air, or athletics, that she actually kept Elena cooped up like a hot-house flower.

Jane Hubert was a dark-complexioned type, impulsive, opinionated, intelligent. Jane and her twin-brother Jack were indulged by wealthy parents who threatened to spoil their promising future unless some kind interference occurred. The Huberts had an Adirondack camp where the twins had found great sport in out-door life, and thus Jane had acquired an intense love of taking pictures. She had a splendid camera and was quite expert in developing and printing pictures.

Hilda Alvord was a generous, good-natured girl with no claim to beauty or wealth, but her perfect health and optimism gave her a pleasing expression which attracted friends much quicker than Nita's petulant beauty. Hilda's father had passed away when Brother was but a few weeks old. Mrs. Alvord was left with the two children but no means with which to provide for them. It was necessary that something be done immediately, so Dr. Baker, the family physician, advised her to take charge of a case of his where patience and motherly care were more important than trained nursing. Mrs. Alvord acquitted herself so well that she found all the nursing she could accept thereafter. This left the care of the baby to Hilda, as well as most of the light house-keeping. The stress of circumstances never worried Hilda however, and she was a great favourite with the school-girls and teachers. She was an ardent worshipper of Nature and anything in plant-life or

flowers secured her entire attention. The windows of the modest rooms where the Alvords lived, were always a tangle of riotous bloom and vines.

As Zan rang the bell of Miss Miller's apartment, a bevy of laughing girls ran to open the door. Miss Miller stood in the doorway of the living-room smiling as they all escorted Zan to greet their hostess.

"Thank goodness, you're here at last! We're all crazy to get down to brass tacks!" cried Hilda, the apostle of slang.

"'Tisn't my fault if I'm late—ask Nita what kind of date she made then went ahead and broke it!" pouted Zan angrily.

"Well, you're here, so let the mistake pass," said Hilda.

Miss Miller had seated herself at the desk while the girls selected comfortable seats and waited for her to begin.

"Zan, we were wondering whether the Adirondack plan is the best for all concerned. Just before you arrived, Nita was saying that she wouldn't go to any poky camp near home. She has set her heart on the Adirondacks, it seems."

Zan turned in amazement toward Nita. "Why, you told me that you'd be glad to go anywhere as long as you could get away from your mother's nagging!"

The girls laughed, and Miss Miller had to bite her lip to keep from smiling at Zan's frank manner of telling the truth.

"Oh, that was before Jane's brother told me about the Adirondacks. They had a camp there last summer, you know, and he says that it's loads of fun 'cause so many people camp about the same water, or lake, and every evening they have dancing, or parties, or moon-light outings," replied Nita, undisturbed by Zan's bluntness.

"That's what *he* said, just because he thought we were going back there this summer and it would be fun for him to have you there to go around with. But father changed his mind this week, and has leased a cottage at the sea-shore instead. Jack wouldn't be so eloquent over the mountains if you should ask him now!" said Jane, who disapproved of Nita's winning ways with her twin.

Nita said nothing, but thought over the unexpected news.

"Well, any one else got a kick coming?" asked Zan, impatiently.

The girls giggled for they well knew that at school Miss Miller would have reprimanded such slang.

No further remarks were heard in complaint, so Miss Miller asked Zan if she had any news to place before them; if not they would discuss the advantage of camping in mountains or country near by.

"Yes, I have!" retorted Zan, emphatically. "I asked the crowd to meet here so's I could tell you all what Daddy offered us this noon. He says we can have Wickeecheokee Farm for our very own all summer if we want it!"

Zan sprung her news with an air of having delivered an all-inclusive reason for accepting the farm offer at once. The faces about her proved that the news did not create the joy she looked for.

"Say, what's the matter with that! Isn't it great?" cried she, impatiently.

"Who wants to camp on a farm?" said Nita, derisively.

"You were crazy to go there last summer—since when have you changed your mind?" asked Zan, frowning.

"A camp's not a camp unless it is the wilderness, and you certainly can't claim *that* for your old farm," pouted Nita.

"My dears, I wish to say a word about the offer," interceded Miss Miller. "I think the doctor's offer at this opportune time is splendid! Hilda was saying just before you came in, Zan, that she didn't see where she could earn enough money to pay her fare to the Adirondacks and back this summer. And Mrs. Marsh won't consent to Elena's going so far away. She's worried for fear Elena will become ill and need her. Then, too, girls, I would rather not spend so much of my salary on car-fare this season, as I have had extra expenses to carry for my mother's illness this spring."

"Have you thought of anything else, Miss Miller?" asked Jane, who seemed to be as pleased with Zan's idea as any other.

"Not yet, for Zan told me this noon before school that she had a place just made to order for us. Woods, water, gardens and all that heart could desire! I suspected the location of this Eden so did not try to find anything else until after this meeting."

"If Elena's mother doesn't want her to go too far off, the farm will be just the place for her," said Zan.

"But, Zan, I don't want mother popping in on us all summer just as we get interested in swimming or climbing. She'd make me come out of the water and roll myself in hot blankets to keep off a chill!" complained Elena, dolorously.

The girls laughed sympathetically, for they all knew of Mrs. Marsh's fears and foibles.

"No danger of your mother dropping in that way," giggled Zan. "Our farm is a hundred and fifty miles from here, on a branch of an old-time railroad. When you reach the last station you still have to ride ten miles in a springless wagon over rough roads. Ha, ha! I see any of your mothers anxious to visit you after that!"

"I'd be glad to go there, for you know the saying, 'beggars can't be choosers,'" said Hilda.

"I'll go anywhere the rest of you go," added Jane.

"Then, taking Zan's word for our seclusion, I'll agree too," said Elena, eagerly.

"And I have already agreed with pleasure," came from Miss Miller.

"It goes without saying, that I am all for the farm," said Zan, looking at Nita for her answer.

"I don't suppose I have any choice in the matter! As long as all of you have voted against me, I shall have to accept your verdict," whined Nita.

"You don't have to do anything of the sort! You can join a crowd of girls who all want to do just what you do—fool away the whole summer on dancing or flirting. *We're* not going in for that kind of a riot, and you can just make up your mind to having a good old rest and all-round country life, if you chum with us!" came from Zan, in emphatic tones.

"I don't know why you always pick on me, Zan! I declare, any one would think you had a special grudge against me," cried Nita, plaintively.

"Pooh! Nita, you know just as well as I do that I have to talk to you straight out from the shoulder to put any sort of go into you! Dad says he thinks you'd fade away entirely if it wasn't for my pep!" retorted Zan, then turning to Miss Miller with an air that closed the foregoing incident:

"Have you any papers or books here about the Woodcrafters?"

"Yes, Zan, I'll run and get them. Meantime, suppose you girls indite a letter to the doctor and thank him for the generous offer of the farm," said Miss Miller, glad of an excuse to get out of the room while the letter was under discussion.

"Then you are all set on that farm?" queried Nita.

"Why, sure! Did you dream anything else?" asked Hilda.

"I'll have to give in too, I s'pose!" sighed Nita.

Zan sent her a glance that was wasted, so she shrugged her shoulders as she took up a sheet of paper and a pen.

The letter of thanks was carefully written and given to Zan to deliver to her father that night. This matter disposed of, Miss Miller spread out the papers she had brought from her room.

"Girls, to tell the truth, I am greatly relieved to know we will start our experiment where we can secure 'ready aid' if necessary. I almost regretted my offer to take you to camp this summer when I had time to think of all it entailed. But the farm will be just the place for us to get acquainted with each other's home-characteristics and, at the same time, permit us to provide a balance in our treasury for a mountain camp next summer. By that time we ought to have a Tribe of twenty or more members, I should think," said Miss Miller, with a sigh.

The teacher was a wise trainer of girls and realised that a word pro or con would settle the question for all season regarding any dissatisfaction in selecting the camping ground. If the girls thought they would have to choose between giving up the delightful camp-plan or accept the farm, naturally they would take the farm. Then, too, she knew that abstract ideas would not have the same impression as actual facts, so she took a package of kodak pictures taken at the farm, and passed them to the girls. Exclamations of delight, surprise, and anticipation were the result. Even Nita felt a semblance to mild enthusiasm as she looked at the beautiful scenes of woods, rocks, water-falls and streams.

"Now, suppose we make notes of what will be needed for the summer in camp," suggested Miss Miller, after a short time. "I am going to take my butterfly-net and outfit so that you girls can make similar ones and collect some of the beautiful creatures. Then, too, I have ordered a bead-loom for a model, and as soon as we have each made a loom, we will begin weaving head-bands and the trimmings for our robes. But these are items to be classed later; we must start on necessities first, and art second, I suppose."

"My goodness! That reminds me, Miss Miller! I almost forgot the most important point in Dad's offer! He says we can use anything in the house that we want, besides the vegetables and fruit of the gardens. The boys had some tents last summer when they took a trip with Dad up the Delaware River. Two are in good order and Bob says the three cots are O. K. as long as we are not too particular about mattresses. Muzzer told me we could have any dishes or kitchen utensils we might need, as well as the pickles and preserves from the cellar."

"Why, Zan! Why didn't you tell this before! I bet you wouldn't have heard one dissenting word, with jam and jelly offered us," cried Hilda, smacking her lips.

"Not only that, but just think of the expense we can save! Why, I think it is just splendid!" added Miss Miller.

The others were delighted to a degree that gave Zan much pleasure, for she loved to have her parents' generosity appreciated.

"After all that, maybe our letter to the doctor is tame?" ventured Hilda.

"Oh, no! It's all right—I'll explain to them at home," replied Zan, eager to continue the camp plans.

Miss Miller returned to the papers and Manual of Woodcraft Indians. She read aloud the various items mentioned for the guidance of beginners, and the girls made notes of things as the ideas appealed to them. The teacher looked over the memos and read aloud:

"Extra tents—cots—material for costumes—shoes for hiking—one-piece suit for swimming—blankets—duffle-bags—toilet articles," and the numerous personal things girls would want during the summer.

"We can wear our gym suits at camp until we have made regular Woodcraft robes," suggested Miss Miller.

"Yes, and we'll have a good opportunity to wear our last year's sneakers and hiking shoes," added Jane.

"Oh! We'll save the sneakers for the tennis court!" exclaimed Zan, suddenly.

"Tennis! Anything more down there on the farm to surprise us with?" cried Hilda, eagerly.

"Sure! Did you think the boys and I spent several summers there doing nothing? Why, we've got a dandy croquet ground, and a child's edition of a golf course—limited!" laughed Zan, thinking of the area covered by their golf.

"Zan had better not tell us of any more delights awaiting us or we will not be content to take the balance of our examinations at school!" advised Miss Miller, smiling.

"That wouldn't affect your reports of us at school," retorted Zan.

Miss Miller was physical culture teacher at the school the girls attended and was a great favourite with all. She was an enthusiastic advocate of outdoor life and was constantly urging her pupils to accept the simple life of Nature.

At Zan's remark, she said earnestly, "Not my branch of school-work, no! But the grand total in education for which I work, as a part of the great machine, would be injured if I did not try to help you all in your educational efforts. I believe that education is necessary to elevate the race. You see, it is not a class that must be lifted and benefited most, but the mass! In education of the individual we finally embrace the universal. Thus, it depends upon each one of us to make good—in school studies, at home, in camp—in fact, in every little thing or thought!"

"We'll make good, all right, Miss Miller, as long as we have you to show us how!" cried Hilda, admiringly.

"Yes, indeedy!" added Zan.

The latter part of the talk was far above Nita's head, but she had been quietly thinking of other things. At the pause which followed Zan's exclamation, she asked, "Is the car going to be sent down for us to use, Zan?"

"Car! What for?" wondered Zan.

"Why, to get to the stores in the town and carry back our provisions, of course! Then, too, we will want to see the country, won't we?" said Nita, surprised.

"Ha! There isn't a store within ten miles, but 'most everything grows right on the farm. A butcher calls twice a week, and eggs, butter, milk, and chickens are provided by Bill," explained Zan.

"Bill! Who's Bill?" asked some of the girls eagerly.

"Why, Bill's the farmer, of course. He lives in the farmer's cottage and looks after the place all winter, besides taking care of the gardens, cow and chickens all the year round. He works the place on shares in preference to a salary, and likes it first-rate, he says," replied Zan.

"Oh, we didn't know there was a resident farmer. When you mentioned tennis and croquet, to say nothing of the golf-links, you failed to give us a hint of farmer or wife," said Miss Miller.

"Well, I had my mind full of sports, you see, and I never class Bill as a sport!" laughed Zan, the others joining her.

"What's he like?" queried Jane, while Nita added, "Has he any sons?"

"Nita thinks, 'better a farmer than no son at all!'" teased Hilda, for Nita's preference for boys was no secret with the girls.

"Bill hasn't any family, but he will act as her escort if she needs a drive about the country for her health!" laughed Zan. "Bill is slow and staid, as well as lank and lean. He is forever twirling a wisp of grass between his teeth while he is interviewing you. He swears by his wife's judgment and his deepest concern is her 'rheumatics.' Mrs. Sherwood complains of 'stiff joints' during winter and claims that this keeps her from exercising enough to keep down extra flesh. Consequently, she is as big and round as a balloon, and wheezes and gasps when she talks. But they're all right, where good-nature and generosity is concerned, and will do anything for us."

"I'm sure I wouldn't be seen going out with *such* a freak!" cried Nita, disdainfully.

"I don't believe Bill would take you, to tell the truth, Nita. He is old-fashioned and doesn't favour French heels and low-necked dresses. He is most orthodox and thinks such frills a sin and a breach of the commandments!" laughed Zan.



"How will we reach the farm, Zan, if it is so far from the station and no way to get there?" asked Elena, dubiously.

"Oh, Bill will get us there, even if he carries us in the old spring wagon, which is preferable to the vehicle he used the first time we ever visited the farm," exclaimed Zan, following her words with a contagious laugh, rocking back and forth until the girls demanded to know what caused her mirth.

"Oh, girls! If you could have stood on that platform as the boys and I did, waiting for the 'carriage' that we expected to take us to the farm! Never will I forget it as long as I live!"

Again Zan had to laugh so heartily that she was urged to share her humour with her friends.

"Dad had been down to look over his wonderful 'suburban investment,' as we called it then, and had been met at the train by Bill with his buck-board. When we were ready to go, Bill was notified how many would arrive. Nothing was to be seen as we jumped off the car and looked about. Fields, fences, and a long stretch of railroad tracks, and back of us a hundred yards or so, the tiny village. After a game of tag with the boys, I spied something moving into sight over the brow of the hill. I called Dad's attention to it and he declared it was our Jehu and the taxi! Well! I wish some one had taken a snapshot of that rig!

"It was of the Noah's Ark type, and the nags to pull it had long since celebrated their thirtieth birthday! We found out afterwards that Dad ventured to warn Bill about driving safe horses and told him how nervous Mrs. Baker was with young untrained steeds. Bill wanted to be on the safe side, I guess, so he hooked up his plough-team. It took us four hours to cover the ten miles! And when we finally got to the house, we all ached from the jouncing and strain of holding to the sides of the wagon."

"Good gracious! you don't expect us to ride in that thing!" cried Nita, dismayed.

"Why not—it was good enough for me!" retorted Zan.

"No, she doesn't, Nita, for I heard the doctor telephone to the farm asking some one to meet us with the spring cart, so I am afraid I shall not have the experience that Zan had that first visit," laughed Miss Miller, hoping to calm Nita's fear.

"Well, I'd rather stay home than ride and make a spectacle of myself like that!" said Nita, disdainfully.

"There wasn't a single boy within ten miles to have seen you if you had been there!" scorned Zan.

"Come, come, girls! Stop arguing and come back to business. There's still much to decide," remonstrated Miss Miller.

"Yes, I agree with Miss Miller! What's next?" asked Jane.

Thereupon, the teacher read over the various pages of the Woodcraft Manual, stopping often to suggest ideas, or tell the girls to make a note on their pads.

"Besides these printed articles, we will need pads to take notes upon when we go on a hike, or study birds and plants. Then, too, we must be sure to take a good camera and win some *coups* that way. Jane, you have a fine one, maybe you can take yours. Elena, you must be sure to take your paints and brushes, and Hilda will take her embroidery things. We must try for all the degrees and *coups* we can possibly hope for this summer."

"Oh, Miss Miller! And I might try for a *coup* in flowers, as I love that work, and have been complimented on my good work!" exclaimed Hilda.

"Of course! Jane, make a note of taking plenty of blue print paper and a frame," added the teacher.

"Hilda, be sure to pack your botany books! Between us, we ought to identify lots of beautiful specimens and make a lovely book of our prints!" cried Jane, thoroughly roused by the thought.

"Dear, dear! Can't some one think of a specialty in which we excel?" asked Elena, anxiously.

"We each can win a *coup* by knowing fifty wild flowers, and Hilda might try for a grand *coup* by finding a hundred. Then, we will all try for *coups* in knowing stars, butterflies, swimming, birds, and other knowledge as set forth in the Manual," replied Miss Miller, enthusiastically.

"Oh, pshaw! Why can't we start this week? I'm so crazy to begin I just know I won't be able to concentrate on my school exams all through this and next week!" sighed Jane.

"Then you'll lose a grand *coup* in education! One must learn to use self-control in all things. When school is over the reward will prove all the sweeter for the hard work that preceded it," remonstrated Miss Miller.

After other minor items had been noted, and the decision made for khaki clothes for ordinary wear, to save the leather robe for ceremonial occasions, the teacher could think of nothing more to be discussed at that meeting. It was growing dark out of doors and lessons remained to be studied that night, so she brought the first meeting to a close.

At dinner that evening, Zan presented her father with the letter of thanks signed by the girls of the new Clan. He read it with satisfaction and passed it over to his wife.

"I hope for great work this summer, Zan," ventured the doctor.

"You can't hope for more than we do," retorted Zan, gaily. "You just ought to have been with us when we discussed the items needed for camp work. Every one is crazy to begin—all except

Nita."

"Humph! And she is the one I expect more from than all of you combined!" said the doctor, thoughtfully.

"Oh, you know Nita, Dad! She'll want to leave the next day when she finds there aren't any boys about to flirt with. And the very idea of her helping at the camp work makes me laugh! If she lasts a full week, I'll miss my guess!" replied Zan, tossing her bronze hair.

"Zan, do you want to do Dad a great favour?" asked the doctor, anxiously.

"Now you know, Dad, I'd eat my head off for you!" cried Zan, throwing her arms about her father's neck and squeezing him.

"Then watch your words and acts regarding Nita—be most considerate of her and have patience! She is mentally diseased and no one realises that she needs healing. This experience with four healthy-minded girls may prove her salvation in after life. I am putting it up to you, Zan, to see that your nursing of this peculiar invalid does not tend to prolong the malady, but will nip the growth of the trouble in its present stage. Perhaps a few months hence would be too late, and a cure would be impossible. I rely on you, daughter, to help in this cure!"

Zan's brothers, Frederick, nicknamed Fiji on account of his unmanageable hair, and Bobs, short for Robert, had left the dining-room to study their lessons. Mrs. Baker, the doctor and Zan remained, so that an uninterrupted silence followed the serious words of the doctor.

Zan sighed heavily, and finally looked up at her father with a bright smile. "I'll do it, if it takes all the spice out of camp-life!"

The doctor smiled as he replied, "It won't, Zan! In fact, you'll have all the better fun for knowing in your own heart that you are doing a duty as well as pleasing your Dad!"

"And while the boys and I are enjoying the days at the beach, I will feel happier than otherwise, to know you are showing your companions what real joy and contentment means when found in natural out-door living," added Mrs. Baker.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### CHOOSING A CAMP SITE

**B**OXES were shipped, tents and cots had been sent, and the hundred and one last items always remembered on the day of departure had been attended to, when Miss Miller met her five charges at the Pennsylvania Terminal, where they expected to take a train to reach the junction in New Jersey. At Junction they would have to change and take a local train before arriving at the insignificant station ten miles from Wickeecheokee Farm.

As the train whizzed by well-cultivated farms, magnificent estates, and later, through beautiful, wooded hills, fertile valleys, and over sparkling waters, the bevy of eager girls exclaimed delightedly at every new scene. A recent shower had cleared the atmosphere, and the verdure shone a brilliant green in the bright sunshine. Birds soared high above tree-tops, singing joyously, while cattle moved leisurely, grazing over the pastures seen in passing.

"Oh, my, but it feels good to be out of the hot dusty city!" sighed Jane, leaning back in the seat and inhaling the fragrant air.

"Yes, I can actually think—away from trolleys and rumble of trucks," added Zan, pensively.

"That's a novelty for you!" teased Hilda, smiling.

"I can hardly believe my eyes! It seems too good to be true—a whole summer with no one to pester you about sickness!" said Elena, with relief expressed on her face.

Miss Miller smiled, but she wondered what the mothers would think if they but knew how glad their girls were to get away from nagging foolish worry. How much better to recognise in each girl of their age a certain amount of responsibility for themselves, and guide by example or suggestion, instead of demands or coercion.

"Next station is Junction—change cars for all stops on the Rahway River branch!" shouted a brakeman from the platform.

"So soon! Why, it doesn't seem like an hour and a half, does it?" exclaimed Zan.

"Why, no! I thought we were only half way there!" replied Miss Miller, as the girls hastily gathered their baggage together.

The party hurried off, and across the platform to a waiting local train on a side-track. The engine and coaches were old-fashioned, the windows small and set high from the floor. The girls laughed at the sight of such cars, and climbed up the high narrow steps to the platform.

Farmers constituted the majority of the passengers and the city girls were amused at the different types presented before them.

"Girls, let's open these windows immediately! Mercy, how *can* any one sit in these stuffy cars with the crevices all stopped to prevent a breath of fresh air entering!" exclaimed Miss Miller, impatiently.

The girls laughed, for it was one of the teacher's pet theories that plenty of fresh air never injured anybody.

The farmers looked askance, however, when the pleasant air circulated through the car and drove forth the obnoxious odours.

Many of the travellers left the train at small way-stations and Miss Miller's party had the car all to themselves during the last few miles of the ride. Zan recognised the land-marks that showed her they were almost through with their journey, and she ordered the girls to get ready to leave the car.

Bill Sherwood had been notified that the party would arrive at noon, and had his team and farm-wagon waiting at the station when the would-be campers jumped down and looked about in high spirits. Zan introduced each one to Bill, while the latter grinned and held his palmetto hat circling in his toil-hardened hands.

Straw had been piled in the bottom of the wagon and the girls were lifted over the great wheel and dropped into the soft straw. Miss Miller was accorded the distinction of sitting on the high spring seat beside the driver. She held her breath in trembling and grasped the edge of the rocking seat whenever Bill turned a corner or gave way to a passing vehicle on the narrow road.

The drive over the hills was beautiful and Bill pointed out various spots along the road and explained the value of soil, herbage, and trees.

After seven or eight miles had been covered, the horses began ascending a steep hill well-timbered.

"When we get to the top of this climb you will get one of the loveliest views we have about here," said Zan.

"Yes'm," assented Bill, "and there's where you kin spy th' farm, too."

"Then we must be almost there," ventured Miss Miller, whose seat on the loose spring board was anything but comfortable.

"No'm, not by four mile more. The gent what ust t' own th' farm afore th' doctor got it, ust t' say, 'Bill, this air th' longes' four mile I ever hope t' travel!'" and Bill chuckled to himself as the team strained at the haul up the steep road.

Long before the travellers reached the farm every one was stiff and glad enough to jump out of the wagon. But Bill warned them to wait yet a while longer—he had pictured to himself the grand manner in which he would sweep between the two stone posts and flourish his whip as the wagon rolled up to the front porch. To permit the girls to jump out prematurely, would spoil his pleasure.

Having accomplished his ambition, he stood by the horses and grinned while the visitors exclaimed at everything they saw.

"What a gem of an old house!" cried Miss Miller.

"And that grand old oak in front—just see how far its branches sweep over the lawn!" cried Jane.

"Look, girls! Look! The original 'old oaken bucket that hangs in the well!'" sang Hilda, as she saw Zan at the long sweep that worked the bucket.

"It surely is lovelier than anything I ever dreamed of," sighed Elena, her artistic sense, for once, gratified.

Groups of fruit trees, some squat and thick, some tall and slender, vied with elms, maples, oaks, and beech trees, in giving beauty and shade to the grounds about the house. Some distance back of the house stood a group of barns, sheds, and a tool-house. The grassy space between was laid out in a croquet ground and tennis courts. Directly back of the out-buildings was a fine kitchen garden and small-fruit bushes and vines. The narrow strips dividing the vegetable patches were a mass of blossoming old-fashioned perennials. The fragrance wafted from stocks, sweet-peas, petunias, pansies and other flowers, attracted bees and honey-birds of every species common in Jersey.

"Rickon you'se ain't sorry t' git 'ere?" laughed Bill.

"Indeed we're not! Travelling all day is as tiresome as working all day," admitted Miss Miller, taking her bag from the back of the wagon.

"Wall, I'll be goin' on t' th' little house, but I'll be on hand ef yuh need me fur anything," said Bill, after he had deposited all the baggage on the porch of the house.

"We're going to sleep indoors to-night and start our camp in the morning, so the only thing we might need will be some milk and butter," said Miss Miller.

"I put two quarts o' milk an' a pound o' butter, an' a dozen o' eggs, in th' ice-chest that stan's in th' back porch," explained Bill, still hesitating.

"Ice! Do you have ice here?" wondered Jane.

"Shure! Th' doctor built a small ice-house th' fust year he hed th' place an' we cuts enough ice from th' pond to fill it every year. Th' pond is fine spring water, y' know, an' th' ice is clear as crystal," explained Bill.

"That's what Wickeecheokee means, you know,—Crystal Waters. Of course, it's an Indian name that Daddy found in some old archives kept in the County Hall at the Junction," said Zan.

"We've taken your word for Crystal Waters but I haven't seen a drop of it so far except what was drawn from the well," laughed Miss Miller.

"Plenty of it when th' Spring freshets come down Old Baldy," chuckled Bill, climbing up to the wagon seat.

"Going home, Bill?" asked Zan, as the farmer gathered up the reins. "Well, thanks, ever so much, for coming for us, and remember me to your wife. Tell her we'll be over there soon," said Zan.

"Oh, that reminds me, Bill, I brought a little present for you and the wife—wait a moment until I open my bag!" exclaimed Miss Miller, going to the porch and taking two packages therefrom.

"Mighty much obliged, ma'am!" said Bill, doffing his wide-brimmed hat, obsequiously.

As soon as the girls were alone Zan unlocked the front door of the house and ushered her companions inside a long living-room. A chimney-piece embraced seven feet of space just opposite the door and the wide cavern of brick fire-place presented a cheery picture to one who could imagine its blaze and crackle of hickory logs while sparks, and tongues of flame, leaped up the chimney on a frosty night!

The girls examined books and pictures while Miss Miller went into raptures over the old mahogany settee, the tilting table, real Sheraton bookcase and chairs, and a Boston rocker. She tried each in turn, then spied a grand-father's clock in the corner, and marvelled at the old wooden works which were strung with cat-gut.

Zan laughed at the different expressions of surprise on her guests' faces, and when the teacher drew forth an inlaid sewing-table, exclaiming at the beauty of the lines, she explained: "Muzzer loves to ride about the country collecting old furniture. Dad made all manner of fun at first, but he, too, caught the germ, and now he will go for miles when he hears of some old family that is scattered and wishes to sell out. The boys and I have stood on the porch and doubled over laughing at the spectacle Dad and Muzzer have made, trying to drive through the gateway while a long carved post of an old mahogany bedstead stuck fast between the gate-posts!"

"What a shame it is to hide these really precious pieces down here! I love antique furniture when it is good and genuine, and I could almost cry to think no one ever sees these!" said the teacher, examining a Colonial Connecticut spindle chair.

"Oh, but we do! And now, you are enjoying them, too!" laughed Zan. "Just come out to the dining-room if you want to see some real stuff!"

An old Colonial side-board, a massive round table, six Chippendale chairs in excellent condition, and a linen-press, gave Miss Miller still further cause to exclaim. The entire scheme was most harmonious, for old braided mats lay upon the wide-boarded floors, wall-paper was of the quaint old-fashioned pattern, and a genuine Franklin heater stood in the corner in case of cool weather. A few logs thrown into its vast cavern, soon took the chill from the pleasant dining-room, Zan explained.

"I am afraid I shall prefer to stay here instead of going to the camp, Zan," ventured Miss Miller, ruefully.

"Then, you'd best sleep on the lawn to-night, for the bed-rooms present still further temptations!" laughed Zan.

The four girls had gone out of the side-door to see what adventures were to be found in the back-gardens, but at this point they ran in all duly excited, so the subject of antiques was abandoned until later.

"Oh, just think! Nita found a rabbit scuttling away. It disappeared down a hole!" cried Hilda.

"Come and see! Hurry up, Miss Miller!" added Nita.

Zan followed the girls, explaining the presence of the rabbit. "The boys started several warrens last summer. One is in the woods, one in the rear garden, and the other is over by the falls."

"I think I'd like to visit the river and falls, Zan, and judge for ourselves of the truth of the kodak picture!" said the teacher.

"Maybe some one's hungry—and the walk over to the woods takes some time," hinted Zan, looking at the others.

"Oh, we had plenty to eat on the train, and we can finish our sandwiches when we get back," answered Jane, eagerly. So the luggage was left on the porch where it had been placed by Bill, and a noisy group started off.

Over springy turf, under shady trees, climbing low walls that divided pastures from grain-fields, these city-bred girls went shouting from very exuberance of spirits.

At the farthest side of a buckwheat field stood a beautiful grove of maples. Zan headed straight for this grove and jumped the stone wall that enclosed the field.

"Hallo! The ground's full of springs! That means we'll have lots of sap next Spring!" said she, smacking her lips.

"Sap! What kind of sap?" asked the girls curiously.

"Why, maple sap, you ninnies! Didn't you know this was a sap-bush?" laughed Zan, looking at her companions to assure herself that they were in earnest.

"I never heard of a sap-bush! I don't see any bushes!" retorted Nita.

"Ha-ha-ha! It's these maples that give us the sap for maple-sugar. I bet there's lots of maple-sugar in the house this very minute. We always come here for a few days when the farmers boil the sap down. It's one of the sports of having a farm."

"Zan, you're a lucky girl! Not one of us ever had the chance of having all you have had!" murmured Jane.

"I just guess your folks could have had ten farms if you had wanted them, but you and your brother always wanted to go to fashionable places!" retorted Zan, truthfully.

They had reached the snake-fence that separated the maple grove from the woodland, and Zan immediately started climbing over the simple-looking barrier. She soon hopped off on the other side and turned to watch the others surmount the difficulty.

"What a queer-looking fence—why do they have two rows of rails?" asked Elena, while the others tried to reach the top rail.

"Dear me! how did you get over so easily, Zan?" called Nita, who constantly rolled back at each step.

"Ha-ha! it's a trick fence!" laughed Zan, doubling over with enjoyment at the different poses the girls were forced to take while they struggled with loose poles that *would* roll over.

Miss Miller stood on the ground and studied the problem for several moments. Then her face expressed understanding and she tried again. This time she did not lean her weight on the upper part of her body as she grasped the loose rails, but balanced on her feet, merely using her grasp above to steady her in climbing.

In a few seconds she reached the top rail, where there was no other hold. She had a choice of two ways: lay down on the length of top-rail and crawl down the other side or jump clear from a height of six feet. She chose the latter.

"How did you do it?" cried several voices.

Miss Miller laughed and joined Zan, who whispered, "You should have mounted at the cross-posts. See what a fine hold that gives you when you reach the top?" and Zan demonstrated her words by climbing back. The girls watched closely and, as Zan returned slowly for their benefit, they endeavoured to imitate her.

"Might as well overcome the first obstacle now as later—you'll find plenty of snake-fences to cross in the country," said Zan.

Nita and Hilda soon found the secret of balancing on the rolling poles, but Elena and Jane had several tumbles before they could scramble over.

A foot-path led through the woods and soon the girls heard the sound of falling water.

"That must be the river!" exclaimed Nita, eagerly.

"No, you hear the water of the Falls. I'm taking you to the Bluff first. We can stand there and see the pool, the stream above the Falls and the slope that goes down to the Big Bridge. We called the Falls 'Wickeecheokee Falls' and the stream,—which really is only a creek—'Wickeecheokee River,'" replied Zan.

In a short time the eager adventurers came to a clearing in the woods and stood still admiring the scene presented.

Just before them, a rocky ledge projected over the Falls about ten feet above the lower level of the water. The Falls were only six feet from top to bottom, where the water formed a lovely pool. On the opposite bank, the ground rose gradually to about five feet above the water, and this bank was thickly carpeted with moss and bitter-sweet vines. The woods began with a close array of trees a few feet back from the stream, the straight timber presenting a dauntless front to the mites who stood gazing at them in admiration.

The Bluff, as Zan said the ledge of rock was called, extended from the Falls back forty feet to the pathway, finally burying itself under moss and thick grass, just where the girls stood. Above the Falls the ground rose gradually at first, then abruptly, with great boulders of rock jutting forth here and there. The swift-running stream cleft through the steep sides, thus forming a miniature canyon, and, where the rocks hung over the water, masses of lichen, arbutus, and creepers suspended in a tangled riot. The skyline was entirely hidden by the thick growth of forest trees.

The sweep downward from the Falls to the bridge had been cleared of undergrowth so that the view presented—fields of buttercups and daisies in the foreground and Bill Sherwood's farm-land and cottage by the road that ran over the Big Bridge—was a most decided contrast to the wild beauty of the woods and cliffs.

"Well!" sighed some of the girls, "No wonder Zan wanted to camp here!"

"Isn't it beautiful! It is more like an artist's ideal than actuality!" added Miss Miller.

"Daddy purchased the place from a well-known American artist," explained Zan, enjoying the appreciation of her friends.

"I don't see how he could bear to part with it—I would want to live here always!" added Miss Miller.

"I say that we choose the Bluff for our camp-site!" cried Nita, going over to the Falls.

"It certainly would be a splendid spot!" added some of the others.

"Well, we'll decide that later—I see Zan wants us to continue," said Miss Miller, as their guide crossed the stream by means of great flat stones.

"The boys and I made this stone crossing—and maybe we didn't have lame backs for a week after we carried these boulders!" said Zan, reminiscantly.

For a full hour more, the city girls climbed steep hillsides or stumbled down wild ravines, stubbing toes on hidden rocks and catching unprotected hair in swinging branches, until all began to feel the fatigue of unused muscles and the effect of hard shoes on mother earth. When Miss Miller suggested supper, every one turned face homeward without a regret.

"We will have our ready-made supper that I brought with me in a box, and Zan can find the milk that Bill Sherwood left in the ice-chest," said Miss Miller, as they entered the cool living-room again.

"And I'll go down cellar and fetch some preserves—mother said we could use all we wanted," added Zan.

"O-oh! goody! just think of it—home-made preserves!" said Nita.

"We'll set the table, Zan, if you show us where to find the dishes, and show us the ice-chest. Nita can go down to help you with the preserves, if you like," said Miss Miller, unpacking a large pasteboard box filled with sandwiches, cake and fruit.

Before supper was quite ready the twilight had fallen, making it necessary to have a light.

"My gracious! I never gave a thought as to light! I am so accustomed to pushing the button and having light, that I quite forgot we had no electricity out here," laughed Miss Miller.

"Oh, pshaw! I forgot, too! I just hate to clean lamps and fill them with kerosene—your hands smell so dreadfully forever afterward!" grumbled Zan.

The other girls laughed but then they had never cleaned lampwicks nor had coal-oil soaked into the pores of their hands!

Zan pouted but made no move to find the lamps. Miss Miller felt sorry, for she knew how unpleasant the task could be, so she began to say, "Zan, I'll—" when she suddenly stopped.

She quickly left the room and went out on the porch to admire the soft tones of approaching grey in the night-sky.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Zan, running after the teacher.

"Why, nothing, dear! I thought I would wait here until you had the lamps ready," returned Miss Miller, keeping a serious face with difficulty.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Zan, reminded of the distasteful work.

As the four other girls had absolutely no knowledge of lamps and their accessories, they could not be expected to offer to attend to them. Zan turned to the teacher and ventured, "I think we can use candles for to-night!"

Miss Miller looked at her charge out of the tail of her eye and bit her lips to keep from laughing.

"I'll go and hunt up some candles. Mother keeps them on the stone ledge of the cellar," sighed Zan, getting up from the step where she had momentarily sat down.

"Of course, I have no jurisdiction over you yet, as we have not formally organised a Lodge, but I know this much!" said Miss Miller, with decision in her voice; "I would not permit one of my Band to shirk a *duty* if it presented itself, no matter how disagreeable it appeared to be. Cleaning or filling kerosene lamps is not just *cleaning and filling lamps for material use*. Don't you know that, Zan?"

Zan looked up at her teacher in blank astonishment and her lips parted as if to speak, but she was silent for a moment.

Miss Miller watched her and waited.

"Why, what under the sun would we use lamps for if it were not for light?" exclaimed Zan, finally.

"Oh, as to the use of lamps—that is another thing. Yes, even an inanimate lamp fulfils its purpose well, doesn't it?"

Zan stared off into the darkness and pondered this.

"I se-ee!" whispered Zan, after a silent pause of some moments. "Miss Miller, I thank you!" and she ran indoors singing.

"Thank goodness, I didn't spoil that opportunity by offering to look after the lamps!" breathed Miss Miller, gratefully, to the Principle of right living.

Zan not only worked out her dislike for kerosene that very night, but she cleaned so many of the small glass lamps that the supper table was a twinkling circle of lights. As the girls sat about thoroughly enjoying the first meal in the country, Zan proved to be the gayest of the party. Several times she met the smile in Miss Miller's eyes and felt well rewarded for learning her first lesson in Woodcraft—even if it was the overcoming of distaste of a given duty!

The four other girls were appointed dish-washers but Jane demurred. "It's so dark and we're tired—why can't the dishes wait for morning light!"

"The morning has work of its own—any one who would eat must earn! You may leave the dishes

till morning if you choose but then there will be no breakfast for that one who shirks!" said Miss Miller, a suggestion of authority in her tones.

"But we're out for fun! We don't want to *have* to do things unless we feel like it," argued Jane.

"I suppose you will say, 'the horrid old thing! She's just as mean as she used to be at school,' if I insist and teach you why a task must be done at the time given," ventured Miss Miller.

Jane flushed uncomfortably for she had entertained a faint suggestion of just such a thought about the teacher. But she looked bravely back at the smiling eyes and declared, "No indeed! I wouldn't be so rude as to say such a thing!"

"Did you girls ever stop to consider the power of our thoughts?" asked Miss Miller, beginning to pile the dishes up on a tray.

The girls, sitting comfortably about the table, looked questioningly at her.

Miss Miller had reached the side of the table where Jane's dishes waited. She took up the plate but leaned upon the high back of Jane's chair and continued to speak in a conversational voice.

"Here's something for all of you to experiment on now! See if any one of you can speak, act, or move a certain part of the anatomy, or even breathe, without first thinking the thing!"

Miss Miller stood waiting while the girls sat and gave their attention to the suggestion. After a few minutes of silence, Nita exclaimed, "How queer! I never thought of that before!"

"But, Miss Miller, we do not have to *think* to breathe! My lungs do *that!*" cried Zan, her education along medical lines showing in her words.

"Well, much of our physical action is all unconscious on account of generations of habit. But let one part of the organism fail to act, and see what ensues! Now, I have tried to learn how to allow my thoughts to take the helm of steering my human ship, and not let the different parts of my body control *me*. You see the ME of myself is not in bones, blood, or muscles. Neither is it to be found in my heart, brain, or any local part of this human temple. The ME is my right and ability given by God to express MYSELF. The only way I have found to do this best is by *thinking right!*"

Miss Miller paused to look around at the faces and see what impression her words had made. Each girl expressed interest; Nita incredulity, Zan amazement, Hilda keen delight, Elena vaguely reaching out for more, Jane intelligent understanding.

"What has all this to do with washing dishes?" asked Nita.

"I am leading up to that; I wish this Band to start at the very beginning to do things right. To do this, we must not do anything thoughtlessly, so the action of our thought on everything about us ought to be thoroughly understood. Anxious thought always produces undesirable effects, just as good, optimistic ones produce harmony and happy results. If one spends anxious thought on the body, or any particular function of the physical organism, that part feels the effect of the quality of thought and responds accordingly."

"But, Miss Miller, you just said we ought to think of our breathing and walking and acting—now you say our thoughts will interfere with those actions!" wondered Elena.

"Perhaps you did not quite get the meaning of my words, dear. I meant to convey to you that no action of the body could take place without YOU—the thinking part of you. When a dead body cannot move, or speak, or breathe, it is not due to anything lacking in bones, flesh, or muscles—they are just the same as in life. It is because the thought that operates and controls the temple is gone. Because functions of the body operate mechanically in response to your thought, I say, *let* them work freely and without interference just as long as they work harmoniously. But do not give any cause for action to be impeded. Never permit fear to enter your thought, as that instantly clogs the machinery of the body. Never waste valuable thought in wondering how to beautify your face, massaging for wrinkles, or leanness or flesh. That only makes matters worse, for instantly your thought carries its effect to the parts you worry over. Let good health and simple living bring about the desired results, and they will be lasting. But girls, I did not intend to give you all this preaching the first night, only I had to correct Jane's tendency to think wrong about dish-washing."

"Now, Miss Miller, how evasive!" laughed Jane, thinking the teacher was joking. "Dish-washing had nothing to do with your theory on thinking."

"Surely you can't expect me to continue the harangue!" returned Miss Miller, starting for the kitchen with a pile of dishes.

"I want to have you apply the lesson to my particular failure to think right about dish-washing!" laughed Jane, eagerly.

"Yes, yes! We all want to hear just how you can do it!" added the other girls.

"Why, just this, dears. We have had our food to nourish the body that must act at the suggestion of thought, and for this blessing we are grateful; for a weak, or impoverished body does not respond to the command of thought, no matter how willing it may be to act. After filling the receptacle for food one should not give way to lethargy—a common fault and inclination. Lethargy forms fat and soft muscles! Express your thanks to your thought and the benefit food gives the body, by obeying whatever dictates thought gives you for the perfect circulation of conditions. The dish-washing is a natural sequence of events following supper. So, I interpret it that thought has this work for us to do which will be sufficient exercise for us after a light supper. The very sense of having *done* with apparent duties for the night, will give your thought a

comfortable relaxation while you sleep. The nagging idea that some work has been slighted or postponed, even though you may not be conscious of its effect upon you, will, nevertheless, cause a mental shrinkage and this in turn will draw your facial muscles into knots, and also cause unpleasant dreams. One who seeks repose with the sense of having completed all of the day's work with as conscientious application as is possible to him, will always find perfect rest in a sleep that renews one's physical being."

"That's enough for one night!" cried Jane, laughingly, placing her hands over her ears and running out to the kitchen.

Miss Miller and the girls laughed as they followed. In less than a minute's time, Jane had a tin pan down on the table and was pouring hot water from a steaming kettle, over the soiled dishes which she had piled in the pan.

Every one was too tired and sleepy to sit on the porch and watch the moon rise over the hill, or listen to the hum of insects, so, provided with a small lamp, each one stumbled up the steep narrow stairway to the floor above.

Even Miss Miller's enjoyment at seeing old mahogany failed to rouse interest in the carved four-posted beds, or high-boys, and the patch-work quilts seemed merely a light covering for weary bodies, while the gaily colored mats before the beds acted for aching feet, the same purpose any ordinary mat might do.

There were four rooms on the second floor. Two large ones with double beds which were allotted to four of the girls. Zan took her own little room that had a window opening toward the moon, and Miss Miller took the other small room with a single bed in it. Just before the girls dozed off, Miss Miller warned them again that the rising hour was five in the morning.

With this last conscious advice all were soon asleep, some to roam in dreams over the hills and valleys, and some to float in mahogany furniture on the breast of the stream, enjoying the flowers and trees as they were swept past.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### DISCOVERY OF THE "THINKERATOR"

THE bright sunshine peered straight into Miss Miller's face in the morning and invited her to listen to the singing of birds, the busy clucking of chickens, and the swish of the pines that stood near her window, at the back of the house.

She leaped from bed and sighed with happiness at the picture of rural beauty before her. But how could the noise of thrifty chickens reach her when Sherwood's cottage was so far away?

"I must investigate!" murmured Miss Miller, as she quickly dressed and crept downstairs. Out of the back door took another minute and she stood on the kitchen stoop looking eagerly about. From the direction of the carriage-sheds came the sound.

"I must call and say good-morning," said the teacher, and forthwith ran along the path until the out-houses were reached.

There, sure enough, was a scolding hen with a dozen chicks misbehaving with all their might, and a few other sedate hens, intent upon breakfast.

"Bill must have brought them over yesterday. I'm glad for the girls' sake, as it will be part of their education—becoming acquainted with all manner of creatures."

Miss Miller cheeped, too, and attracted one of the small yellow balls of down and soon had it cuddled up to her face. The mother-hen, albeit she had been scolding a moment previous, now flew into hysterics at the threatened kidnapping of her chick.

"Poor little mother! Did you think I would rob you of a child?" laughed Miss Miller, as she carefully placed the little chick in the grass. Then, taking a deep breath of fresh morning air, she walked back to the house.

"I suppose the children *are* tired after yesterday! I must guard myself and not be too critical and severe with them—they are still young and only partially developed, both mind and body!"

She reached the kitchen and started preparations for breakfast. While the cereal was boiling and the kettle singing, she gathered a bouquet of flowers from a roundel on the front lawn. These gave fragrance to the table, and by the time the dishes were all placed, the cereal was cooked.

"High time they were up!" quoth Miss Miller, as she went upstairs to rouse the girls.

But Zan, a true country girl, had been awake for some time and enjoyed the fresh morning breeze from her window.

"Did you make friends with Groutch?" asked she, as Miss Miller smiled a good-morning to her.

"Groutch—who's Groutch?" pondered the teacher.

"Why, the old hen! She's always quarrelling with friends or family, so we named her Groutch," laughed Zan.

"Oh—the hen! I wondered how she got there? Did you see me talking to her?" replied Miss Miller.



Zan laughed delightedly at an opportunity to correct the teacher. "No—I *saw* you there but *heard* you talking!"

"One for you, Zan! That casts discredit on my early morning thinking apparatus, doesn't it?" said Miss Miller, laughing at her own expense. "But tell me—did Bill bring the chickens?"

"Thereby hangs a tale," giggled Zan, turning her back and asking Nita to hook the centre of her dress-waist.

The other girls came in to hear a possible story, and Zan explained the presence of Groutch and her friends.

"Last summer Fiji had the chicken-raising fever and we let him have the carriage-house for his venture. He succeeded, too, but Fall came and we had to go back to the city. He had sold half his chickens to mother during the late summer, and wanted to sell the other half to friends in the city, but Daddy didn't like the idea of that. Finally, the butcher in Junction took all he had, and when it came time to deliver the chickens on our way home, not a sign of Groutch and the three other hens could we find! We had to leave with only the spring chickens. A day after we got home Bill Sherwood wrote Fiji that the hens all came back to roost outside the house the same night. Fiji wrote for him to take them to the butcher the first time he went to Junction. And, Miss Miller, you can believe me or not, those hens skiddooed every time Bill Sherwood planned to catch them! After several vain trials, he sent word to Fiji that he was done with chicken chasing! How we laughed at that letter!"

"How remarkable! And I never gave chickens credit for any intelligence!" said Miss Miller.

"No, and most folks think they are stupid things; why, you know the slang saying, 'crazy as a hen,'" added Nita.

"Well, they're not! Why, that Groutch wouldn't even go to live in Bill's chicken coop with his flock. No siree! She just sulked about here until Bill had to open the carriage house for her to make her nest again. Then, he cut a small opening near the door so she could get in and out when the door was locked. In the next day or two, Bill missed the other hens from his chicken-house where they had been contented. And what do you think! That sly old hen had gone after them and led them back to their original home—and there they've stayed ever since! Whenever we come down to visit the farm those daffy old hens cluck and wriggle about Fiji's feet as if he were the Prince and they his subjects!"

"I think that is lovely! To think of those hens showing their joy and recognition that way!" exclaimed Miss Miller, amazed.

"Daddy says that Fiji has the true Nature instinct, for every animal he meets seems to know him instantly and show a regard for him," added Zan.

"I have always wished that I had that great gift! It can be cultivated with great sincerity and love for Nature, but some are gifted with it unconsciously!" sighed Miss Miller.

The four girls had listened to Zan's tale with wonderment, and as Miss Miller remembered the breakfast, and said it was waiting, Jane said, "We should have missed this in the Adirondacks."

"I see many beauties we would have missed had we gone far off to the mountains! One of them is the lowly and silent lesson under Elena's feet," said Miss Miller.

All eyes looked down at the floor but saw nothing beside the braided mat. Miss Miller smiled and ran down-stairs without vouchsafing an explanation.

"Miss Miller certainly does puzzle me until she deigns to explain—then it all seems plain as day!" said Hilda.

But further talk was interrupted by a delighted cry from the front porch. The five girls hurried down and joined their teacher on the porch.

"Why—strawberries! How did they get here?" cried some of the girls.

"A note on top of one box said that Mrs. Sherwood sent them over for our breakfast—if we had not finished already!" laughed Miss Miller, looking at her watch.

"It must be almost eight o'clock!" ventured Nita.

"No, it is five to six!" replied Miss Miller.

"Six—why it feels like noon!" said Jane.

"That's because the air is so invigorating," returned Zan. "We always have to get up early in the country, and that gives you such a long, long day to enjoy!"

"I suppose Sherwoods rise at four," Miss Miller said.

"Dear no! Why four o'clock is almost midnight! Why should any one wish to get up at that dreadful hour!" cried Nita, horror-struck at such habits.

"Because country folks retire with the sun and rise with it—that's what all true Indians do, and so will we presently," said Miss Miller, smiling at the various expressions on the faces about her.

"Come now, we'll hull the berries and then enjoy them!" and in a few minutes every one was engaged in crushing the ripe fruit in a deep dish of rich cream—real unadulterated cream!

When the dishes had been washed and placed in the closet Miss Miller advised each one to unpack what baggage had been brought by hand the day before. The clothes worn on the journey

down to the farm were to be carefully hung in the closets upstairs and the ordinary gymnasium uniforms worn until their costumes were completed.

"Our next step will be to choose a permanent site for our tents, and try to move the articles we need from the barn to the woods," said Miss Miller.

"Can't we ask Bill Sherwood to do that? It's so warm to-day," cried Nita, peevishly.

"If Bill were not here, who would you have do it?" asked the teacher.

"Hire some one else, I s'pose," muttered Nita.

"I wonder what you would have done if we had gone to the wild mountains for our first experiment, as you wanted us to," asked Zan, curiously.

"Oh, that would have been different. We'd *have* to do our share there, you know, or go without," replied Nita.

"That is exactly what we intend doing here—work or go without!" said Miss Miller, emphatically.

"But that tramp across the fields and woods to move the bedding and other stuff! Phew, Miss Miller, do you realise what a herculean task that means?" replied Nita, dismayed.

"It gets worse every minute we stand here and worry over it!" laughed Zan.

Without further ado, Zan, followed by Miss Miller and all of the girls excepting Nita, went toward the barns where the boys' tents and outfits were stored. They were soon thrown out of the wide hay-loft window and due inspection given them to test their worth for usage.

"Girls, has either one of you thought of a possible way to carry these outfits over to the Bluff without exerting yourselves too much?" asked Miss Miller, when the girls stood ready to shoulder their burdens.

They looked at each other for an answer. None came. Finally, Jane looked at the teacher and laughingly remarked, "One of your *think-right* schemes?"

Miss Miller nodded and smiled. "How did you know?"

Jane was dumb, as she had merely thought of teasing Miss Miller and was taken aback at her reply.

"Is it possible that Zan hasn't an inkling of what to do in this case—and she is a country girl?" added Miss Miller.

No one seemed inspired with original thought that morning, so the teacher started for the woods, carrying her burden.

"Wait a minute, Miss Miller!" shouted Hilda. "Give us time to figure this out, and save our backs!"

Every one laughed, still no one could solve the way to move without doing the moving. Again the teacher sighed and said, "When one won't think, one must pay the price!"

This time each girl shouldered as much of the outfit as could be comfortably carried, and followed in the footsteps of the teacher, who was at least twenty feet in advance.

At the Bluff, the heavy luggage was dropped with sighs of relief. Miss Miller left the girls to either think or go back for the rest of the canvas and cots.

"I am going down to Bill's for the stuff that came out by express a few days ago. The cases are down in the Sherwood's barn. Bill offered to open them and help me take the stuff out. While you girls see that the other things are moved over here I will attend to moving up the new things." With this the teacher started down the slope.

"Hey! Miss Miller, won't you tell us the secret in moving without moving?" laughed Zan, catching hold of the teacher's short skirt as she passed.

"I find that a child that depends upon the mother to help it out of difficulties never advances like the one who has to work his own problems. I believe that one reason our city newsboys are so clever is just because they must depend upon their own wits. It puts a sharp edge on wits—using them for oneself."

As soon as the teacher had disappeared about the corner of Sherwood's cottage, Zan suggested a plot to trap her. The other girls laughed merrily and jumped up to follow Zan into the woods.

The boxes and bales at Bill's barn were soon unpacked and Bill stood up wiping his brow with a red bandanna. He took a calculating glance at the steep slope and remarked, "Some haul!"

"Oh, not for a strong plough-horse that has been idle for two days!" replied Miss Miller, innocently.

Bill flushed and his eyes shot fire as he said, "Meanin' jus' what, ma'am?"

"Why, you told me how Nancy ate her head off since the family were not coming down and no extra work could be found for the horse to do. I thought she could drag these things up to the Bluff for us," replied Miss Miller, finding it hard to control a strong inclination to laugh.

The farmer's face underwent a sudden change as he smiled broadly and replied, "Oh, ya'as-sam! Of course! Nancy is a powerful beast!"

The two went to the barn to request Nancy to come forth and take her part in the day's work, when Miss Miller spied a queer steel-barred frame lying on a rubbish heap by the side of the barn-yard fence. It looked like a skeleton of a huge cradle without rockers.

"Bill, what is that strange thing over there?"

"That? Oh, that's a section of an old harvestin' machine we hain't used fur years! They've got better ones nowadays. That one is on'y good t' sell fur junk!" explained Bill.

"Then we can have it now, can't we? Have you a piece of strong rope?"

"Sure! but I don't see what yuh want with this ole cradle," mused Bill.

"You'll see!" said Miss Miller, as she tied one end of the rope securely to the steel cradle and hitched the rope to Nancy's harness. The cradle was dragged across the grass to the pile of articles awaiting transportation. The cradle was soon filled and Nancy started up the slope. At the Bluff the goods were deposited and Bill sent back with Nancy for the rest.

Miss Miller stood sorting out the various things when a loud laugh sounded from the trunks of some nearby trees.

"Ah-ha! We caught you shirking work!" called the girls as they ran out and surrounded the teacher.

"Oh, no you haven't! You merely saw the effect of some common sense thought!" retorted Miss Miller.

"Hum! So that is what you meant when you wanted us to think of an ordinary way to move?" laughed Zan.

Miss Miller nodded while the others stood about with nothing to say.

When Bill came up with the second load he smiled at Zan as he remarked, "Miss Miller is some conniver, eh? But I rickon she ain't strong on th' house-work idees. Ef she was, she'd be a powerful help to my ole lady who gits laid up regerlar ever winter with stiff jint, so thet mos' th' house-work comes on me."

"Bill, maybe I can show you both some things this summer that will not only make living a joy but keep stiff joints out of your experience entirely," replied the teacher.

"Say, ef you kin do that! The doctor tried en failed wid his medicine, an' him's a smart doctor, too!"

Zan laughed appreciatively at the comparison and turned to Miss Miller. "Now, you have to show Bill or lose your reputation as a 'conniver.'"

"There goes Nancy—down the slope toward her feed-bag! If you girls want to take advantage of my patent moving-machine, you'd better run after and catch her!" laughed Miss Miller.

This put an end to health discussions at the time, and the girls raced after the horse before she could get too far away from them. It was a simple matter to haul the outfit from the barn to the Bluff, and Zan plumed herself upon the idea that made them hide behind the trees to watch the teacher and discover her plan to move the baggage to the Bluff.

All assembled about the heap of baggage on the Bluff, Miss Miller suggested that each one select a spot for her tent and start erecting it.

"Why, the Bluff here is the very spot!" said Nita.

"Couldn't be better!" added Elena.

"It has a lovely view, hasn't it?" said Hilda.

"I don't see how it is practical!" objected Miss Miller.

"Why, do you know of a lovelier place?" asked Jane.

"Oh, no. The *beauty* goes without saying."

Zan pondered the accent on the word "beauty" and the way the teacher spoke of practical. She waited for further developments.

"Well, then, girls, let's shove these bundles off of the Bluff and drive our stakes!" ordered Nita, taking for granted that every one would do as she said.

"If you have no objections, I think I will pitch *my* tent over by the edge of the forest trees," ventured Miss Miller.

"Of course you can camp where you like, but I don't see why you'd go way back there when this wonderful view can be had as we lay in bed and watch the sun rise!" remonstrated Nita.

"Guess we won't spend much time in bed watching the sun rise, and the view is just as fine out of the tent as in it," replied Miss Miller, as she picked up her canvas and ropes and started for the grassy ground near the trees.

The girls began with mallets and pegs, but the stakes would not go down. The moss was only an inch thick and scarcely any soil lay underneath in which to hold the pegs. Here and there a crevice in the rock would permit a stake to enter a bit and snap it off short. The girls grew hot and angry at the futile work but Miss Miller seemed to be very successful in pitching her tent.

The girls stood and watched for some time, as she drove some stakes in the earth quite easily, then fastened some ropes from one tree to another to give extra security in case of a blow.

A few smaller twigs and saplings had been cleared out of her way, leaving a delightful shady spot where the tent stood. Zan swallowed her pride and went over to look at the completed work.

"The view isn't so very much when you come to think of the fact that we won't be in our tents very much!" ventured Zan.

"I don't expect to use mine except for sleeping, and one can't see the view in the dark," returned the Guide.

"Miss Miller, did you know we'd have hard work trying to drive pegs in the Bluff when you stood there waiting for us to *think*?" asked Zan, smilingly.

"Yes, dear, and I would have liked to save you the work, but that isn't helping you. Charity never helps, it hinders."

Zan ran back to tell her companions, but found them all in a quarrelling mood because they had been so unsuccessful in accomplishing their own intentions. Nita was saying disagreeable things to the others, and Jane had just told Nita what a little cat she was. Hilda had rolled over in the freshly pulled moss, her face buried in its cooling green. Elena sat pouting on the edge of the Bluff swinging a mallet back and forward, threatening to strike Nita's angry face every time it swung back.

"Girls, we're a lot of idiots! Miss Miller is the only one with sense. Go over and look at that tent, then come back with sugary smiles and drag these tents over next to hers. I have just learned to parse the word beauty as she pronounced it when she said, the *beauty* of the Bluff went without any contradiction. In parsing, I find that beauty is not always the desirable object! It's well enough in its way, but for driving stakes to hold down canvas tents, give me a good old solid chunk of ground!" said Zan, decidedly.

"Well, anyway, I'm not going to hide myself way back as far as she is. We can find plenty of ground nearer the Bluff and not feel cooped up by the trees," ventured Nita, as the other girls followed Zan's example and carried their paraphernalia over to the trees.

Thus it happened that Nita's tent stood first from the Bluff, a few feet to the side of the trees. Hilda and Elena chose a site a few feet back from Nita's and near enough to a tree to utilise its trunk for the ropes. The third smaller tent was quite close to Miss Miller's but not as far back as hers.

"The stakes do not go down as deep as I think they should, girls, but you can change them this afternoon if you decide to move back where my tent is. As they stand now, a strong wind may tear them down."

"Oh, they'll hold all right! What's the next thing to do?" said Jane, who was tired of bothering with tents.

Miss Miller looked at her watch. "It's only ten o'clock and you girls have been up since five. Maybe you'd like to walk to the house for a piece-meal?"

"Would we? Well, I just guess there'll be no dissenting voice on that proposition!" laughed Hilda.

"I must confess, my appetite says it must be nearly supper time," added Jane.

Without further ado, the Clan started for the house to pacify a gnawing that interfered with work or play. On the steps of the front porch, a veritable feast was soon enjoyed. Although it consisted of bread and jam sandwiches, with water as a stimulant, never did the five girls taste anything so delicious. When all the delectable bread and crumbs disappeared, sighs came from five hearts.

"Dear, why is it that good things never last half long enough!" wondered Zan, aloud.

While the others laughed, Miss Miller arose from the floor where she had been sitting, and walked out to the grass at the side of the house.

"What do you see, Miss Miller?" called Elena.

"I thought we might have a little visit in the garden. We will like some edibles at camp to-night, and the garden is so near, we may as well see what we can find."

The girls eagerly assented to the plan and were soon on the path leading to the garden, pails and baskets swinging as they went. They were passing a patch of early potatoes when the Guide called their attention to the humble vegetable.

"Doesn't any one here eat potatoes?"

"Of course we do, but we can get them on our way back," replied Hilda.

"How many of you know whether a potato is a root, fruit, or stem?" asked Miss Miller, as she stood near a healthy plant.

"Wh-y, it's a fruit, isn't it?" replied Jane.

"No, it's a root," added Zan.

"'Tis neither," said Miss Miller. "A potato is a swollen stem that sends up shoots above ground to bear leaves. I will show you," and the teacher dug up a small potato.

"As the potato grows these small eyes form deeper folds. It looks for all the world like an eye with a heavy lid over it. If we want to use this potato the next year for planting, it is left in the cellar until time to cut. In early spring these eyes send out tubers, and every tuber will make a new vine when planted. Sometimes one large potato will make several good vines.

"The old potato furnishes starch for the new growth to feed upon and before the young potatoes form under ground the old one is dried up by the use of its starch. The green leaves send down

nourishment in turn for the young potatoes at the end of the stem, until they have attained their growth in the Fall.

"Potatoes used to be grown from seed that formed in the small pod left when the blossoms fell off. But growing potatoes from tubers of old ones was so much quicker, and saved so much labour, that a crisis has been reached in the present day. The potatoes are now unable to produce seed! No seed is to be had for general use. Last year an offer of several hundred dollars was made for a thimble-full of potato seed, and do you know, girls, that not a farmer in the United States could procure enough potato seed to win that prize offer!"

"Why, my goodness! What will we do?" said Zan.

"We'll have to retrace our steps and find a way to accomplish progress without so important a loss. No one has ever given a thought what to do in case of a potato famine, for the homely vegetable has always been so abundant. But its very value is depreciating slowly, for very few potatoes will keep long, and almost all potatoes have great black spots in the centre, while many of them have 'dry rot.' This is due to the manner in which they are grown to-day. Each crop depletes the nourishing qualities of the new one, and finally they will no longer flourish."

"Add to this the pest of potato bugs and it looks as if potatoes were doomed, doesn't it?" added Zan.

"Bugs? Why, Zan, do potatoes have bugs?" cried the girls.

"The vines do! Potato bugs look a great deal like a lady-bug only I think they are prettier," replied Zan.

"But they are not as harmless as the lady-bug," added Miss Miller. "A potato bug will soon destroy a vine if it is left to feed unmolested."

"What can one do to them?" asked Jane, curiously.

"Dad pays the boys and me a cent a dozen to carry a small tin can under each vine and, with a stick, push them off of the potato vine into the can with some kerosene in it," said Zan.

"Ugh! How can you! I think that is horrid!" exclaimed Elena, her artistic soul in arms against such a method.

"This summer Bill will have to spray hellebore on the vines, or use Paris Green to kill the bugs, for I don't want to spend time that way any more," said Zan, laughing at Elena's expression.

Miss Miller smiled, too, as they continued through the garden and came to the grape arbour. She gave them a short talk on the habits and qualities of various grapes and how to distinguish the grape-vine-leaf of the different varieties.

"Miss Miller, I spy a few cherries left for us by the robins. I will climb the tree and pick them while you tell the girls about the fruit," offered Zan, taking her basket and soon, up among the branches, throwing down cherries for the Band.

"If we had been a few weeks sooner we should have seen the blossoms fall off and leave small cups where they have been. This cup dries up and finally bursts. Inside it, the tiny green cherry has been forming. This now grows and with the aid of sun and rain, becomes this size, but it is still green; when it is full-grown it turns a pale yellow, then pink, and lastly a crimson like this one. At that time, the fruit is ripe for picking, or the robins will get them before you know it! Robins are very fond of ripe cherries."

Zan had gathered all within reach and slid down the tree with her basket. "Hardly worth the bother—there are so few," said she, shaking them in the bottom of the basket.

"But they are fine and sweet!" remarked Jane, smacking her lips over one.

"Oh, look quick! See the rabbit over there in that green patch!" cried Elena, eagerly.

"Yes, it's one of the bunnies I told you of. He knows where the carrot and cabbage patches are. He's digging for a carrot now. Let's go over very softly and watch him," said Zan.

But the rabbit was too timid to remain at dinner with a number of noisy girls watching nearby, and he soon disappeared.

Hilda pulled out the young carrot the bunny had partly dug out and asked Miss Miller about it.

"The carrot is a root vegetable that is at first a tiny thin string that grows down into the dark earth. As the leaves grow the root grows too, and in the fall when the leaves dry and die, the root remains until it is dug out for use. If it is not used it remains in the ground until spring when it sends up new leaves and flowers. The blossoms make seeds and these in turn fall and grow new carrots, then the old one, its purpose fulfilled, dies."

"Poor old carrot! It works away down in the darkness all its life, and furnishes flowers for new carrots, and then dies, without ever having enjoyed the world," sighed Zan.

"But it did its work well, and that is all we are expected to do here," said Miss Miller.

"Well, I think I'd like a bit more beauty in my life than the carrot gets, or I'd rebel," laughed Elena.

As the Band walked through the garden, first noting one vegetable, then another, they arrived at some fruit trees. "There's a prune, girls," said Miss Miller, pointing to a plum that hung in the sunshine from a slender tree-branch.

"A prune! Why, it's a plum!" laughed Nita.

"A plum that will be a fine prune some day!"

"Are prunes made from plums?" asked Elena, dubiously.

"Yes, but not all plums will make good prunes. A special kind is raised for that purpose. In California, where most of our best prunes come from, great orchards of plum trees grow and bear fruit. When the plums are ripe they are gathered and packed in boxes to be shipped to every part of the globe."

Zan spied some raspberry bushes after that and ran over to see if any were ripe enough to pluck. She gathered enough for supper, and turning back to join the other girls, found Miss Miller pointing out the difference between red and black raspberries. The girls listened eagerly to the interesting information that showed them how the blossoms fell to make way for the green seed. The seeds later, swollen to the size of a ripe berry, being green, gradually changed to a pale yellow; the sun and dew still reaching it turned it to a pink, and at last to the rich crimson with the down on the face. If it should happen to remain on the stem, it would finally dry up and scatter its tiny seeds to sink into the ground and start another vine growing the following spring.

The Band gathered enough lettuce and fruit for supper, and vegetables for dinner the following day, before Miss Miller started toward the house.

After leaving the garden, the teacher explained that she thought they ought to hold a meeting that afternoon at the Bluff. Being only five in number, they could not have a charter granted by Headquarters until the customary number were members—ten or more.

"We will try and win our rights by doing the required tests as quickly as possible, then, when we can take the Fire Brownie's tests without mistakes, we can call for a second Band to unite under our Tribal banner. The two can grow side by side until the number—ten—belong to each Band. After we have two Bands and at least ten members all told, we will be ready to be initiated as a Tribe by the Council at Headquarters."

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### TRIBULATIONS OF THE CAMPERS

THE girls followed the trail, leading to the Bluff, picking up dry twigs, bark, and grass on the way. Elena, with customary desire for artistic effects, had stopped at the house in passing and taken a Navajo blanket from the settle. This she proposed using for a covering on the rock where Miss Miller would sit during the first Council.

She ran gaily after the others, calling to them to wait. As they stopped so many times for handfuls of fire-material, Elena soon caught up with them. The blanket was heavy, so Miss Miller said she would be exempt that day from duty of gathering fire-wood. Just before they reached the Bluff, however, Elena spied a hollow old tree. Instantly divining what might be found therein, she threw down the blanket and ran over to investigate. Sure enough! From the hiding-place Elena drew forth an old squirrel's nest.

"Oh, ho! just see what I found, Miss Miller!" cried the delighted girl.

The others crowded about and envied the joy of being the first one in the Band to find such a trophy.

"Girls, wouldn't it be fun to begin at once and try for an honour in campercraft? When we finish our organising let us experiment with fire-making until we succeed according to the book."

The girls eagerly agreed to the teacher's suggestion and were soon seated in a circle about the upthrust of rock where the teacher sat as was her right. The Navajo colours made a bright dash in contrast to the sombre grey of rock and green of forest.

"If there are any preliminary questions to ask, girls, let us attend to them, as we will want to conduct our first meeting in an orderly manner," Miss Miller waited, but no one had anything to ask, so she continued.

"Of course, you all know that I took the degree of Camp Doctor, as I passed more than twenty of the tests. Being trained as a physical culture teacher, I naturally understood most of the tests given. Dr. Baker and Mrs. Alvord stood as sponsors on the application and Hilda represented the third witness necessary. She intends taking part of the tests soon, and qualifying for the degree. As Camp Doctor I feel that I have a right to act as director of this camp until one of you qualifies in degrees, or otherwise, to take rank as Guide or Chief. How long that may be in the future only Time will show. Now, your parents all agreed to choose me as Guide, and I have their signed agreement so to do. This should go in our Tally Book as part of our first procedure in meeting."

Miss Miller took a paper from the bag that bulged with papers and books, and showed it to the girls. They recognised the signatures as being those of their parents, so Miss Miller proceeded with the next item in order.

"We must have a Tally Book for the general use of the Band, and each girl ought to have one of her own. I saw one that belonged to a member of the Council and it was a work of beauty. As Elena is artistic by natural talent, I suggest that she take charge of our Band's Tally Book. Each

one ought to take such a pride in her individual book that it shall merit an honour at Headquarters when it is displayed—but this is a matter for personal ambition. The Keeper of the Tally Book fills the place of secretary in other organisations, so I would advise Elena to make a memo of the minutes of this meeting. I have a book made up for general use, but a piece of paper will do now, to make notes upon. From that you can copy the minutes correctly and decorate the real book as elaborately as you like."

The girls approved the choice of Tally Keeper and Elena was delighted at the opportunity to display her talent freely. Miss Miller referred to the Manual to assure herself that she was acting according to order. She gasped and looked up suddenly.

"My! I started off this meeting without the usual ceremony of opening council with the Omaha Tribal Prayer. I was told that this was an important function, so, girls, let us sing it now."

Miss Miller arose, motioning the five girls to stand also; then started singing the words and music of the prayer while the girls tried to follow as they watched her. This done, she seated herself again, and turned to Elena.

"Make a note that each girl must learn the words of the song by heart before our next meeting. I have the printed music in my tent."

Elena scribbled a memorandum and the Guide placed a large book, made of brown paper pages, covered with natural tanned leather, on her knees, saying, "We'll enter the names of our members now, and then we can call the roll properly."

This was the next step accomplished, so that all felt they were proceeding in a business-like manner when the Guide gasped a second time.

"Dear, dear! Girls, we should have started a fire the *very first thing!* Elena, *please* do not enter all these errors in our Tally Book—it is unpardonable! But this is all a new idea for me and we must all seek together for the result. We will patiently retrace our steps now, and begin with the council fire. Do any of you understand how to use rubbing-sticks?"

Each girl looked at the other but no one knew the use of the sticks, so Miss Miller sought in the bulky bag until she pulled forth a bow and sticks, then she sought again until the section of wood and a hemlock knot was brought out. The girls gazed curiously at her as she began.

"You must each start a set of fire-sticks of your own, using models given in a book I have in my trunk. Now, let me start the first council-fire and you watch carefully so each can do it when the turn comes."

Miss Miller prepared the dry wood material all had gathered on the walk to the Bluff, but chose Elena's dry squirrel nest as tinder. She placed the eight-sided (almost round) drill so that the thong of the bow went about it *once*, to prevent slipping. Then the point of the drill was placed in a notch of the fire-board and the board accurately placed over the fire-pan. This in position, the Guide began sawing back and forth with the bow just as if she was scraping strenuously on a violin. After some minutes of this, a faint suggestion of smoke came from the block; then it was easily seen that the wood was charring and the smoke grew heavier. Several more firm strokes brought a lively curl of smoke from the board and fire-pan, and Miss Miller stopped to blow softly on the small heap of dark dust that was piled up in the tiny wooden notch. This suddenly emitted a spark, then died down as suddenly. Still the Guide blew softly and swayed back and forth to keep a gentle current of air stirring on the powder. Then, she quickly took a handful of the dry nest and placed it over the powder just as a second red spark gleamed from the small heap. The smoke grew thicker, and before the girls could exclaim with surprise, a bright flame shot up before their eyes.

"There now, let us build our first council fire in the centre of our circle," said Miss Miller, as pleased with the result of her efforts as any one could be.

The fire was carefully fed with dry moss, leaves and twigs, until the blaze warranted some wood to be piled on to sustain it. The new members stood around admiring the feat, and all wanted to try the rubbing-sticks to see if they could make a fire.

"No, indeed! Each must make her own set to use and never borrow mine!" laughed the Guide, placing the set behind her as she sat on the council seat again.

Hilda was elected fire-keeper for the occasion and the others all sat down on the grass again.

"This time, girls, I believe we have followed first rules, so that we can go on with our other business affairs," said Miss Miller.

Zan had been looking over the Manual and suggested, "We haven't chosen a Wampum Keeper yet! I know a good one!"

Miss Miller smiled. "I guess she is the one I had in mind."

"Girls, have you any choice—a Wampum Keeper acts as treasurer you know, as well as sees that our beads and other details for ceremonial councils are in order," explained Zan.

The girls looked at each other for a moment only, then Elena said, "Hilda is the best house-keeper of us all, and she is exact in keeping accounts, too, so I think she ought to be Wampum Keeper."

"I think so too!" added Jane.

"Just what I thought," agreed Zan, looking at Miss Miller. The latter nodded smilingly, but Nita said nothing.

"Hilda is chosen by all but you—have you any other one in mind?" asked Zan, turning to Nita.

"Oh, no, I s'pose one's as good as another, but I don't see why Hilda should be given charge of the money belonging to our Band. She never handles much and is not accustomed to it," retorted Nita, showing jealousy in every tone.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jane, angrily. "I guess Hilda has charge of more *real* money than you ever saw! She runs the house for her mother, you must remember, and *she* pays *cash* for everything and enters it in her book, too!"

Zan felt like adding something disagreeable but remembered her promise to her father, so Jane's answer delighted her. Nita flushed unpleasantly as most of her friends knew that her household was conducted on "charge accounts" and merchants had great difficulty in collecting bills. She hastily agreed to Hilda as treasurer after Jane's remark, and the Guide continued.

"Now, as Zan has had more real experience in rural life than any of you, I suggest her for Big Chief of this Band."

This was unanimously voted upon and it became Zan's privilege to select a Little Chief to act in her absence. Zan, without hesitation, chose Nita.

There was a second's pause as if the choice was a surprise. Zan glanced toward Miss Miller and found her eyes beaming, for both recognised the silent vow of the other to do all they could to wean Nita from her past temptations and open before her desires, a wider and higher plane upon which to grow.

Nita was so delighted at being elected Little Chief that she forthwith began "preening her plumes." The other girls seemed not to like the choice but Miss Miller hastily changed the subject by introducing one of great interest.

"Girls, I have so many things to say that it is hard work to keep to one subject, but I will try. Now, we ought to try for all the honours and *coups* we have opportunity to win. I know of no spot where so many advantages combine to offer us these opportunities as this section of New Jersey. Flowers, birds, trees, insects, trails, reeds,—in fact everything, we find at hand to study. We are given the farm to use during our ten weeks' vacation, and sleeping in tents all summer means we win a *coup* for fulfilling the sixty nights sleep out of doors! Then, there are *coups* and grand *coups* staring us right in the eyes, for the simple act of taking hold of them! Just think of it! We can win *coups* for dancing, for weaving, for star gazing, cooking, building, rug making, and lots of other things. I shouldn't wonder, what with the talent of each one used to teach all the others, that we might aspire to becoming an honour Tribe before the year is out!"

"Oh, Miss Miller! You should have had a *coup* this very day for making that fire, shouldn't you?" asked Zan.

"No, I'm afraid I can't claim that, as Elena found the nest, and the others gathered the fire material; but I am glad I know how to do it, as the next attempt will be easy. For every claim for an honour or *coup* you must be sure to have three witnesses so that our claims will go to Headquarters properly made out and signed. I should hate to have them send us back our papers for lack of attention on our part," said the Guide.

Zan had been glancing through the lists of *coups* and honours, and now exclaimed, "Why, I can win a *coup* for swimming and one for walking, as easily as rolling over on this grass."

"Yes, all these things count when done rightly, and I am most enthusiastic over the promising future for us," said Miss Miller.

"Well, let's get going on something to win our first *coup*," cried Jane impatiently.

"If all are agreed, I will read the Law from the Girl's Manual aloud, and then adjourn the meeting with the Zuñi Sunset Song," ventured the Guide.

"Ho, Miss Miller! Wait a moment! Jane wants to get busy too soon! I see a very important thing here in the Manual that we ought to hear before adjourning," cried Zan, holding the book open for the Guide to read from.

"This is very important, girls, so I will read it," admitted Miss Miller, as she glanced over the page. "For our first summer we will be styled 'Wayseekers' (Tiopa) and we must qualify as such. Also, we must begin to perfect ourselves in fifteen of the twenty-three qualifications needed to promote us to 'Pathfinders,' (Mikana) as shown here."

The Guide then proceeded to read the different articles set forth in the Manual, and some time was given to the discussion over each item. The girls began to realise that there was much more in being a Woodcrafter than mere fun-making, and the deep meaning of the work began to be understood.

"From present appearances, it looks as if it would take us a life-time to accomplish all of those tests," said Jane impatiently.

"It's only one at a time, dear! If you were country-bred and were accustomed to wild life, you would exclaim at the simplicity of the work," said Miss Miller kindly.

"I guess that's so! It is merely our ignorance of ways of rural life. Just as soon as we really get down to business we will be astonished at our progress. I remember how it was with our classes in school. From the books it seemed too hard to master, but whenever we took a trip to the woods to study botany, and other things, it just became so easy!" added Elena.

"All right, let's go to it now!" cried Zan.



"Zan, if I was a member of the National Council I would surely exile any one who used slang as much as Hilda and you do!" remonstrated Miss Miller.

"I just bet more than half the girls would be exiled then!" retorted Zan.

"I find on page 20 of the Manual that one must abstain from a besetting sin for one moon! I reckon that covers the difficulty with you girls—slang is your besetting sin, so you will surely have to abstain if you are to qualify."

As Miss Miller said this, the girls laughed at her clever manner in reaching the delinquents through the Manual.

"Well, Tribal friends, I'm growing stiff in the 'jints' as Mrs. Sherwood would say, from sitting in one position so long! Is there anything more to do?" said impatient Zan.

"Why, of course! we haven't been baptised yet!" laughed the Guide.

"Oh, that's settled long ago, as most children's names are. We will be called Wickeecheokee Band," replied Zan.

"Such a mouthful! Do you really yearn for that name, Zan?" asked Jane plaintively.

"Not if there's a better one!" returned Zan.

"We might use a short name for our Band and later when we are a Tribe use Wickeecheokee for the Tribal name," suggested Hilda.

This was declared a good idea so silence reigned for a long time while all sorts of names were considered. After many suggestions and much debate the name of Wahko Nia, meaning springs of water, was cut to Wahko for everyday use. The long Indian name could be used for impressive occasions if needed. So the name of Wahko Band was entered in the Tally Book.

With a song the meeting adjourned, the girls jumping up stretched themselves with sighs of relief. The next words from the Guide changed their contentment to consternation.

"Girls, some of our food is still at the house!"

"Mercy! Why didn't we bring it over when Nancy was working?" asked Jane.

"I simply won't trail back there to-day!" whined Nita.

"If some of us are willing, it seems that all of us should help, or go without supper," said Miss Miller gently.

The other girls started off without another word, and the Guide waited a few moments to see if Nita would join her. Instead, Nita wandered toward her tent saying, "I am going to lie down and rest!"

Miss Miller felt discouraged at the failure, so soon, in the attempt to help Nita, but she trudged after the others without further coaxing of the stubborn member. At the house, the food was soon packed in baskets, and every article that might be found necessary was tucked in at the sides. Just as they were ready to return, Nita was seen sitting on the edge of the porch with a huge basket of things she had voluntarily gathered in the garden without a word from the others.

Of course it was entirely unnecessary for that day, but the Guide felt that it was Nita's peculiar way of showing how sorry she was for her recent behaviour, so the basket of vegetables and fruit was accepted with delight.

On the trail back to camp the fruit was devoured by the hungry girls, then Zan began nibbling at some crackers she found in her basket. The others wanted to sample the crackers too, so Miss Miller had to interfere.

"If you eat sweets now you won't want to have any supper when it is ready."

"Oh, won't we though! It is very evident, Miss Miller that you never camped with hungry growing girls before!" laughed Hilda.

As the Bluff was sighted the girls felt eager to end their journey, so put on an extra spurt of speed.

The baskets were placed upon a high flat rock to be out of the way of insects, and Miss Miller looked at her watch.

"If you are not tired, girls, there is just time for a swim before starting on a hike—or would you prefer a walk first and then the swim?"

"Oh, goody!" cried Zan, running toward her tent.

"But, Miss Miller, we haven't any suits yet! They have not come from the city!" said Elena disappointedly.

"It wouldn't injure the fabric in your union suits to wear them—not this once! And each one of you brought a heavy suit with you in case of need!" ventured the Guide.

Nita and Jane laughed hysterically at the idea, but the other girls clapped their hands and agreed that the suggestion was great! Without further objection, the two former girls also started to find their union suits in the baggage that was packed in their trunks inside the tents.

While they were dressing Miss Miller called out, "How many of you can swim the required hundred yards and win a *coup*?"

"I can—or at least I could last summer," replied Zan.

"I can swim some, I don't know how far!" said Jane.

"I can swim a stroke!" exclaimed Hilda, and the other two girls admitted the same lack.

"Dear me, girls! don't tell me that you three can't swim at all!" cried Miss Miller, amazed.

"What opportunity has a city girl to swim?" asked Hilda wonderingly.

"Why, child! In winter there are a number of good Municipal Bathing houses open for girls, and everything is kept in splendid order too. Then, in summer there are plenty of summer resorts near the city where one can bathe and learn to swim!"

"But a girl can't visit them alone, and parents haven't much time to escort one to such resorts—so there you are!" replied Hilda.

"Yes, that's true! Well, with fine camps started, girls, as well as boys, will be able to enjoy the woods as well as the waters of the country, without cost of time or money for parents," said Miss Miller, as she came from her tent dressed in a neat one-piece bathing suit.

The others were waiting for her, looking self-conscious in their union suits. The Guide saw this and decided that they must be made to forget themselves at once. So she proposed a race from the tents to the willow tree that stood by the pool. The winner to have an extra cookie for supper.

The scramble that followed proved just the thing to distract their thoughts from their appearances, and by the time all reached the tree, they were laughing, and gasping for breath.

The pool, in summer-time, was nowhere more than four to five feet in depth. Possibly, just under the Falls the water might measure six feet, but no one ever went there. From the Falls the water spread out in a circle-like basin until its centre measured about thirty feet across. It gradually narrowed again toward the willow where the stream formed the outlet of the pool. The entire floor of the pool was of rock, worn smooth by the water. This smooth surface and the Falls creating an ever-flowing current, kept the pool clean and the water as clear as glass. It was partly due to the bed-rock that made the water so transparent, that the Indian name for Crystal Waters was given the place.

Miss Miller urged the girls to jump in but Nita dipped her toe in at the edge and screamed, "Boo! but it's cold!"

"That's not the way—do this!" laughed Zan, plunging in and immediately submerging her whole body.

"My, what a wet mess your hair will be!" called Hilda.

"The sun'll soon dry it again. Don't bother about your hair! Half the fun in swimming is ducking your head!" sputtered Zan.

Miss Miller plunged in next and took a few strong strokes that carried her halfway across the pool.

The girls on the bank watched her admiringly.

"My! Miss Miller, you sure can go it!" cried Elena.

The Guide's example encouraged the three girls who hesitated on the verge of the pool. Jane had been swinging on a pliable branch of the willow, enjoying herself immensely. Zan now called to her to come in with them and show how far she could swim. Jane in her eagerness to race with Zan, let go the willow before her footing was quite firm on the bank, with the result that she stumbled and fell against the three girls huddled on the wet grass. Before any one knew how it all happened, Jane, and the three girls, went pell-mell into the water, creating a mighty shower of water everywhere.

"O-ooh! Help! Murder! S-swish—sc-cswash!" and other queer sounds came from the struggling group of girls. Miss Miller had just gained the opposite bank and had seated herself on the grass when the funny accident took place. Zan had been treading water and had missed the slide, but jumped up at the shouts.

"Oh, what a funny motion picture that would have made!" gasped the Guide as soon as she could speak.

Jane was swimming over to join Zan, and the three soaking non-combatants, tried to force their fists into their eyes vainly hoping to expel the water. Ears were singing, and noses snuffling and they looked like anything but joyous pleasure-seeking maidens.

After a few minutes, however, the fear of drowning faded with the sense of feeling their feet on the rock which was only a depth of a foot or so, where they had scrambled up. The wild laughter of Zan, Jane and the Guide did much to reassure them that life still held on with a firm grip for them.

"As long as you're all soaked, why not come in gracefully?" called Zan, taking a dive and swimming under water to the spot where Jane rose to rest. In a few seconds Jane gave a frenzied scream and went head down, heels up, in the water.

"Oh, look! Jane's sinking!" cried Elena.

But Zan's head appeared alongside Jane's heels, and in another moment, the victim of Zan's mischief bobbed up.

As her head appeared again, Miss Miller called, amid spasms of laughter, "Right position! Front! Mark time!"

Zan was the only one who thoroughly enjoyed the command so often obeyed at school, while Jane snuffed angrily, "Just wait!" The three deluged girls were too busy trying to lower their bodies gradually, and still keep their feet flat on the rock.

"Oh, here! Nita, hold on to my hand while you let yourself down flat on your stomach! Then try and kick out as Zan does," advised Hilda.

Nita obeyed and held clutchingly on Hilda's hand. Just as she felt herself touching rock-bottom and experienced the delightful sensation of being buoyed up by the water, Elena, who had been experimenting alone, splashing out arms and legs, suddenly came in contact with the timid beginner and shoved her under water. Nita excitedly caught hold of Hilda's foot and a second unexpected dive took place, with Hilda, the heavy, on top of Elena, the light.

More cries and shouts from the tobogganed beginners, and yells and laughs from their audience. Then, the Guide started across to show the three girls how to begin.

After fifteen minutes more of practice, Miss Miller said, "Time to come out, girls. We've been in over half an hour, and that is quite enough for the first dip."

"Dear me, at this snail's pace, we will be Wayseekers all summer!" grumbled Hilda.

"Oh, no you won't! In a week's time you'll be swimming a few strokes and in another week probably you can do fifty yards. Your power of endurance will determine how soon you can swim the hundred yards," said Miss Miller, as they reached the camp, and went in to dress.

"Not one of us remembered to count our hundred yards, although I'm sure I did fully five hundred all told," said Zan.

"Counting that under-water trick—yes, maybe you did!" replied Jane, giving Zan a look that boded no peace for the future.

"How does every one feel! Weary—or right for a short tramp up the ravine?" came from the Guide who dressed first and was waiting on the Bluff for the girls.

"Weary—I should say not!" cried Hilda enthusiastically.

"I'm as fresh as a daisy! Could climb a dozen ravines," added Elena.

"I'm not tired, but why do any more now?" sighed Nita.

"Because we want to drive that lazy spirit out of you!" retorted Zan, dragging the girl up to her feet.

"I thought we might take a hatchet and whittling knife with us on the hike and put them to use for our third test," suggested Miss Miller.

"We'll have to get a hatchet, or small axe at the house," answered Zan, with a frown at the idea of walking to the house again.

"No, I placed one of the hatchets in my tent after we had finished driving the stakes. Bill took his home I see, and Zan carried the one from the house back to the tool-house, for I watched her and mentally gave her an honour mark for placing things where she found them," commended Miss Miller, as she went to her tent and brought out a small hatchet and displayed the knife called for by the rule.



"Aren't they dear! Where did you get them, Miss Miller?" questioned Zan, as the girls crowded around the Guide and admired the new tools.

"I wrote to Headquarters and found out where I could purchase outfittings," replied the Guide, leading the way toward the hill. All of the girls wore khaki bloomers and soft shirts, with heavy stockings and rubber-soled sneakers protecting legs and feet, so that the hill-climb presented only a Nature test to be thoroughly enjoyed by them after their invigorating bath.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### SOME AMAZING THINGS IN NATURE

"GIRLS, as long as we are off for a hike, why not make something worth while of the time?" asked the Guide looking at her companions.

"Anything you say goes with us, Miss Miller!" said Zan emphatically.

"Well, then suppose we try to identify our native trees—as many as we find in this section of the country—and begin to gather wild flowers and plants, for Jane to make blue prints from. At the same time we can study their botanical features and arrange them in groups for use in trays, or pictures."

"Why, that is a novel idea! How did you think of it, Miss Miller?" cried Elena, her artistic nature roused.

"I love wild flowers, and I always did think they would make beautiful decorations if properly treated so they would retain their lines and details," replied the Guide.

"It's too bad you didn't mention it sooner, so I could have brought a basket or something to keep them in," said Jane.

"Why carry a basket when one can be had for the picking!" laughed Miss Miller.

Again the girls were mystified, and waited for an explanation. It was slow in coming for the Guide seemed very intent upon seeking for something she could not find.

After ten minutes' walk she exclaimed, "Ha! I thought so! The kind of grass I wanted always grows near the hill-tops."

She motioned the girls to sit down while she gathered a few handfuls of long wiry grass and showed them how to weave a fine grass basket. It was a small model but very compact and strong. They watched eagerly while deft fingers flew and the grass strands went in and out, until the roll on top was finished. The handle was another matter, and Miss Miller said she would make that another time.

"But this is so dainty it will never hold plants or roots!" said Elena.

"Not this sample but we can make others on the same lines and use other materials. Perhaps Zan can show us where we can find some rushes, or wand-grass. Then too, willow makes good strong baskets."

"Why, sure! Right down by the Bid Ridge we can gather all the rushes we want, and a whole group of young willows grow over by Pine Nob—that's a giant hill back of Hamilton's Farm," exclaimed Zan eagerly.

"Some rainy day, then, we will sit by the fire and make some rush mats," added the Guide.

"Oh, stop! please don't mention any more, or my head will whirl off!" laughed Jane, holding down the top of her head, but with eyes sparkling with anticipation of all the *coups* waiting to be won.

Miss Miller smiled as she started on up the hill-side. "Don't wait for me to point out a tree—take the first one you see. The same with the flowers and shrubs."

"But here's some grass that ought to make a strong basket!" called Nita, who was a few paces ahead.

"Yes, let us gather some and construct a carrier in case we find some plants we want to dig up, root and flower," advised the Guide.

They were all eagerly engaged in their first attempt at weaving with grass and found it not nearly as easy as it seemed when the Guide was doing it. Sometimes the grass slipped, sometimes it broke; then, it would refuse to slide up or down, and again it would cut into tender flesh if it was pulled too hard.

After a time, however, a sort of a misshapen bowl-like article was finished by Hilda who declared it looked just like an Eskimo's treasure. The other girls decided to carry their material and half-finished shapes with them and wait for another recess in the hike before weaving more.

"I see a maple!" exclaimed Elena, as they climbed.

"Pshaw! every one knows a maple tree so there can't be anything new worth hearing about a maple," said Nita.

"How do you know but that we may discover some new feature about a maple that you never dreamed of before?" asked Miss Miller.

"Hitherto unpublished—exclusive rights claimed by Wickeecheokee Band!" added Zan.

"Not so many moons since, I met a group of girls who were greatly surprised to find that sugar came from maples!" added Miss Miller, smiling at Nita.

"Oh, that was different! What I mean now, is, that every one knows a maple when they see one, and it's nothing new."

Miss Miller examined the maple thoughtfully for a moment, then said, "How many of you know what kind of a maple this is?"

"We have one like it on the front lawn and Dad always calls it "the red maple,"" replied Zan.

"Yes, it is a red maple. *Acer* is the Latin name, while maple is the common name. Now look at the height of this tree and tell me how tall it will grow before it reaches its full growth?"

"This one is not twenty feet, is it?" asked Elena.

"No, about twenty—I should say."

"The red maple on our lawn is at least thirty feet high, Miss Miller, and Dad says it is an old tree," said Zan.

"About thirty feet is the average height. Now, tell me, do you think this tree will thrive best on this hill-side or down in the glade beyond the bridge—where the ground is low and moist?" continued the Guide.

"I don't know—do you?" said Jane, looking at the other girls.

"Give up! There's another item we failed to know," replied Zan.

"The red maple thrives best in low woodsie land. It needs rich soil and plenty of moisture. Now examine the bark of this one carefully. It is smooth and spotted, but this is an old tree in spite of its height, for the spots grow dark on old trees and are always lighter on younger ones—in fact, quite young trees have white spots. Its timber is valuable for house trim and some kinds of cabinet work. The red maple is highly ornamental and of late years has been selected for landscape gardening and shade trees."

Miss Miller looked at the tree a moment, then said, "We will review this lesson on the house-lawn where Zan says a large maple grows. Now, pass on to the next tree."

"I see a great big oak!" cried Elena.

"How many kinds of oak do you suppose there are in the world?" asked Miss Miller.

No one could tell her so she replied, "I do not know myself, as I suppose there are many species never heard of in the great forests of South America, Africa and Asia. However, we know there are the White Oak, found mostly in the United States, Adriatic Oak, European Oak, Live Oak of the Southern States, the Holm Red Oak, commonest in Northern States—this is a Red Oak tree—, Black Oak, one of the loftiest of forest trees, and a Live Oak of Asia. The timber of each one of the Oak species is valuable, as its grain is straight, the wood hard, and of strong quality and durability. I remember the oak ceiling timber of my old home.<sup>[A]</sup> The house was built long before Washington crossed the Delaware and my father inherited it along with a few acres of ground. When I was a little girl of about six, mother wanted the old dining-room modernized. The carpenters contracting to do the work showed us some solid timbers that were hewn out by hand with the axe. On the side where mother wished two windows to be turned into a bow-window for her winter flowers, the men had to saw through a beam as hard as iron. Finally, the boss carpenter said, "We will have to take this beam out whole to save time and strength." They did so, and what do you suppose we found cut in one side of that oak beam?"

The girls had been listening with all attention, but of course no one could imagine what was found.

"The dates of the time when Washington's army were in winter quarters on Fort Nonsense, Morristown, N. J. Several of his men were stationed at the old house and had cut their initials in the beam which must have been exposed at the time. Father found out that the window-casing and ceiling of plaster were added later to beautify the house according to up-to-date ideas at the time. At the time the army camped on the mountainside, the house was of rough timber, without any attempt at finish or adornment."

"How interesting!" said some of the girls.

"What became of the log?" asked practical Zan.

"The George Washington Headquarters requested the loan of the beam to exhibit in their museum."

"Then that oak beam lasted over a hundred and forty years and was good as new when found!" declared Zan wonderingly.

"Yes, it would have lasted a hundred and fifty more, if it had been left encased safely as it was when found," replied Miss Miller.

"Was it a Red Oak?" asked Nita.

"How could Miss Miller tell, you ninny! She was only six years old!" said Jane.

"I don't think any one thought to investigate at the time. The people were not so keen for Nature lore then as now," laughed Miss Miller.

Then continuing, "This oak has leaves, you will see, with deep veinings; they are scalloped on the edges, and curved out toward the middle-sides and in again toward the end. This tree, I should say, is about eighty feet high, although they grow to a hundred. Their diameter is from one to three feet through. The leaves of this oak were green when they first grew but they turn red as the season advances and by fall they are a beautiful crimson."

As they passed on, Jane cried, "Here's a chestnut tree, as every one knows!"

"Do you know anything of its individuality?" asked Miss Miller.

"I know that it blossoms into long feathery catkins that smell very sweet, something like the blossoms on our grapevines," said Zan.

"And I guess every one knows that the fruit is found in a burr that pricks your fingers like fury if you're not careful," added Elena.

"I know that the wood is good for fence-posts 'cause Dad ordered Bill to be sure and get chestnut posts for the fence that closes in the out-houses," Zan remembered.

"Anybody else wish to contribute?" asked Miss Miller.

"Every one wants to but can't afford it this time," laughed Jane eagerly.

"Well then, the chestnut is a deciduous tree that grows to a considerable height and size. Its timber is light weight, cross-grained and very durable; that is why it has been preferred in the past for posts. Its leaves are long and shiny and has sharp pointed edges. The nuts are sweet and of a starchy nature, also highly nutritious. The variety we have had in such numbers in the Middle Atlantic States have been destroyed by a strange fungoid disease that attacked them and was spread rapidly by wind and the birds until the finest trees are gone! It is almost impossible to detect the diseased tree until it is fated and soon an entire grove is doomed beyond help or cure.

"Foresters and gardeners have sought to protect and save other trees by cutting down a tree the moment the symptoms appeared, but it has been found useless. Even the timber of a diseased tree is worthless as it is soon entirely eaten by worms that are bred in the tree during the first stages of the disease."

"Maybe that is why we don't see so many chestnuts for sale?" pondered Hilda, who was very fond of the nut.

"Perhaps, and perhaps it is because a sick tree does not bear well. Personally, I believe chestnut trees like quiet and retirement and droop to die when civilisation creeps too close to their environment. If that is so, the chestnut trees have seen their best days, and the future will continue without any acquaintance with the extinct tree," said Miss Miller.

"Miss Miller talks of trees just as if they knew what was going on about them!" laughed Nita.

"That's what always makes her talks so vital and interesting to us!" commended Zan.

"They are all alive, and *do* know all that concerns them, but mortals never stop to think of this! I look at it in this light. We read in Genesis that God made *everything* and He saw that it was very good. Then, the narrative goes on to say that the Creator who made everything that was made had all Life, all Intelligence, all Love within Himself. Of this great power and love He created man in His own image and likeness. Man was given dominion over all *living* creatures and things. Now take that into your thought, girls! All living things! I firmly believe that the good God who gave us charge of all *living* things wanted us to watch over and love and use intelligence in the way we governed His creation. This tree is a *living thing*—it has as much of the divine authority to live as we have. It has as much divine intelligence as anything created for a purpose. So, this tree is recognised by me, who am also created by the same Father for a purpose, as a living thing growing to beautify the universe and to provide man with delicious food."

"Oh, Miss Miller if you were only a man what a fine preacher you would make!" exclaimed Zan enthusiastically.

"I can preach as well in my sphere as a woman!" laughed Miss Miller.

"Oh! are you a suffragist!" gasped Nita.

"Would it change your opinion of my qualities and character, if I admitted I was? I did not *say* I was, I only ask you if it would make a difference to you with what I *really* am?"

"Well, I don't know anything about the matter except what my mother said to her friends at a card party one day. She didn't understand how women could lecture and parade and ask for the vote when they could have a good time at home playing bridge and going out shopping, or taking a week-end trip to some friend's country house."

Miss Miller never said a word in reply neither did she tell Nita whether she was a suffragist, or just a pleasure-seeking woman.

"Dear me, what was it we were talking about when we got switched off the track!" said Elena.

"Chestnuts!" laughed Zan, the others joining her.

"I see a hickory tree—I'll choose that if you're through with other subjects," said Nita.

"All right, and we will give you first choice to tell us all about the tree," replied Miss Miller, as they forced a way through the undergrowth until the tree was reached.

"I don't know a thing about it except that I like the nuts."

"How did you know it was a hickory tree if you were not familiar with the bark or leaves," asked Miss Miller.

"I heard Zan say so and point it out to Jane as being a splendid tree for nuts in the fall," replied Nita.

"I can describe the nuts and the shell, and that's about all. I always know a hickory when I see one, by its leaves and the way it grows, but I can't tell why it is so," said Zan.

No one could tell so Miss Miller explained. "The hickory is found in plenty in North America. It has pinnate leaves, grows from seventy to ninety feet high and is slender in trunk. The timber is heavy, tenacious, and strong, but it decays rapidly when exposed to heat or moisture. The bark is rough and easily stripped. The blossoms are short catkins, sweetly perfumed, and the nuts are highly nutritious, forming inside of a cover of shell-bark that peels off in quarter-plates."

"I think I can describe one after that, and pick out a hickory from other trees," remarked Hilda.

"So c'n I—who couldn't?" retorted Jane.

"How many trees does that make?" asked Miss Miller.

"Maple, oak, chestnut and hickory," Zan counted off on her fingers.

"Four! We've got to find six more," cried Elena, pushing on to seek a new variety of tree.

"Here's one that you'll be glad to hear about," called Zan. They turned back and saw a low bush-like tree that would have been passed by without a look, if it hadn't been for the alert Zan.

"That's a bush!" sneered Nita.

"It's called a tree in botany!" retorted Zan triumphantly.

"Yes, a hazel-nut is a tree although it looks like a bush to me," explained Miss Miller.

"Is that a hazel-nut tree?" wondered Jane amazed.

"It doesn't look like much!" said Nita deprecatingly.

"Looks don't count for everything—wait till you want some hazel-nuts. This is a record-breaker for nuts!" snapped Zan, defending her pet hazel-nut.

"I consider a hazel-nut a very interesting specimen to study. Its blossoms are very small and very sweet; in fact, a cluster of hazel flowers makes a lovely nose-gay. The male tree blooms in catkins and is more conspicuous. Its growth is like unto a large shrub or low tree with wood that is tough but flexible. The leaf is shaped like a roseleaf and notched on the edges. The nuts form in a bell-like cup and the meat is very sweet and good.

"The Witch-hazel, from which a fluid called 'Pond's Extract' comes, is peculiar in that it blooms in the Fall—the yellow stars shining in the woods. The name originally was spelled 'wyche' meaning a box. The wood was always used for making chests that fitted in old-time halls. These chests or wyches, had no connection whatever with magic. To-day, however, the common belief is that the name is derived from the magic power of the 'Dowser' or Water-Finder. A hazel wand is accorded the quality of discovering water under the ground when held in the hands of certain people. If the holder passed over a spot where water could be found the wand would bend until its tip touched the earth where water could be found if dug for."

"Do you believe that, Miss Miller?" asked a sceptical one.

"I used to accept the statement as a fact until quite recently when I read of a renowned engineer who claims that the wand is quite unnecessary as water can be found by any one strong-minded enough to concentrate upon the discovery about to be made. This Englishman, who is an authority in such matters, says that many well-known engineers have tried and found that the wand has not the inherent power to discriminate or fathom for water. I have known folks who might experiment and carry a wand forever without its ever moving a hair's breadth in their hands, as they themselves were too material and 'thick' to discern the things under the earth or above the earth, either!"

"Let's sit down here and listen to more of this queer talk," suggested Zan eagerly.

"No, we are out for a tramp to find trees and I am not going to talk of things you are not old enough to understand," said Miss Miller positively.

"Miss Miller, here's a maple, but it's not red!" said Jane, pointing to the rounded top of a thick tree.

"That's a sap maple like the ones in the sugar grove. If it were spring we could tap the trunk and get some of the sweet saccharine that rises up in the trunk. The sugar maple grows as high as seventy feet and sometimes measures three feet in diameter. It has hard wood, of satiny lustre. It generally has a well-formed crown and thick foliage. A single maple will yield from five to ten pounds of maple sugar in season."

"Zan, for goodness' sake, let us have some sugar when you can get it!" exclaimed Elena.

"All right, remind me and we will ask Bill if there is any left from this spring's boiling," replied

Zan.

"There's a Christmas tree, Miss Miller."

"Oh, help! A spider's got on me! It crawled from that bush!" cried Nita, vainly squirming and shaking herself to throw off the insect.

The other girls ran away from her for they too, were afraid of a spider.

"Pooh! It won't hurt you! Can't any of you tell the difference between a poisonous and a harmless bug?" Zan cried.

"That gives me an idea," said Miss Miller, as Zan brushed off the gaudily striped spider. "The first afternoon we have to spare from routine plans, we will take up the interesting study of insect life, and learn not to call everything a bug!"

"If we do half the things we hope to accomplish, we'll be the prize Tribe of the Indians!" commented Zan.

"We must always strive for the unattainable. Although we are not aware at the time that our goal is far beyond our capacity to attain, still it is the incentive that makes for progress. Having once obtained what we desired, we are disappointed in the realisation and so keep on striving. Discouragement and laziness, are the two worst enemies that progress ever meet. I think that of the two discouragement is even harder to combat with than laziness. So, with our plans for the summer: we outline far more than we can actually accomplish but it is an incentive and we push onward and upward."

"Who chose the last tree?" called Elena, during the silence that followed upon the little lecture.

"Nita found a Christmas tree," replied Jane.

"That is a pine tree—of the family of *abies*. Spruce, fir, pine, and others all come under the family name. You will always see a pine tree grow straight up, unless some obstacle turns aside its natural tendency. The pine wood is composed of cells that are filled with piney sap. It is a long-lived tree, there being on record pine trees that are 2,000 years old—a report says some pines in the Holy Land have been found that register an age of 3,000 years. The timber of pine trees is very useful for hardwood building purposes and the sap is used for the manufacture of turpentine, oils and resins. The limbs grow on an almost horizontal line from the tree and the offshoots of the limbs follow the same strange line. The greens form in a flat shape almost like a fan, and when young and tender make the best of camp beds. When a tree is utterly decayed the wood forms pitch and tar."

"And in December, the tree is in great demand by all children for decorative purposes!" added Zan, as Miss Miller finished her discourse.

"Yes, I find I always forget the most important item, or at least Zan thinks so," laughed the Guide.

"My! I never knew so much about wood in my life!" exclaimed Elena.

"Trees, my dear! don't call these magnificent tall giants by so common a name as wood!" corrected Zan.

"I guess there aren't any other varieties in these woods," ventured Nita, looking about for a new species.

"Oh, yes, there are. I have seen a dozen more in a short walk," replied Miss Miller.

"Here's a kind we haven't had. I don't know what it is, though," said Jane.

"That is a birch tree. Haven't you ever chewed birch bark?" said Zan, disdainfully, at Jane's ignorance of a birch.

"I've tasted birch beer but I don't like it!" said she.

"Birch flavour is used in soda water, candy, and soft drinks of all kinds. It is also in great demand for flavouring obnoxious medicines as it disguises the disagreeable taste," said Miss Miller, adding, "Who can describe the birch tree?"

"I don't believe any of us can; I was the only one that knew what sort of a tree it was, and that is all I can tell," admitted Zan reluctantly.

"The Latin for birch is *betula*." Its flowers grow in catkins and bud in early spring. The tree is often as high as seventy feet. The wood is highly prized by cabinet makers. The bark is so durable that it has been found intact after the tree has decayed. Often a woodsman will come across a birch that seems to be newly fallen. He will strike in with his axe to ascertain the value of the timber and the bark will split showing a hollow inside, or at least a mass of decayed wood. The bark is very useful for the building of canoes, dishes, wooden utilities, and even hats.

"The mahogany birch grows in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, to the height of seventy to eighty feet and is two to three feet thick. In spring the rich green leaves of this tree are covered with a thick down almost like hoar frost. It is beautiful at this season. Later, this down disappears and the leaves remain a bright green. They are oval shaped, and pointed at ends. The timber of the mahogany birch is a hard close-grain and of a reddish brown colour."

"Mother just got a new chamber suite of furniture that she bought for mahogany and told all of her friends at the bridge club about her magnificent mahogany furniture for her guest-chamber. When the club met at our house she took the ladies in to show off the furniture. Mrs. Dewitt said, "Why, my poor dear Mrs. Brampton, you were cheated if you bought this for mahogany!" My



mother got awful mad at first, then another lady told her the wood was stained mahogany and was known as mahogany birch. Mother sent it right back the next day and said she would never trade at that place again. But the man tried to explain that the furniture was called mahogany, and at the price she should have known that it was birch. Now *I* will know how to tell the difference between birch and real mahogany, won't I?" said Nita eagerly.

"Yes, but I trust you will be able to use your knowledge for a better purpose than just discriminating in furniture. The simpler your furniture the less mental work you will need to think of it. That gives your thoughts so much more time for happier work and ideas," replied Miss Miller.

"I see a tree over in that little dell that looks as if it had nuts growing on it," said Hilda.

"I guess it has, for it is a beech tree," replied the Guide. "Can you describe any of its points?"

"We have gathered beech-nuts every year, Miss Miller, and Mrs. Sherwood and mother have pickled them. Umph! but they taste good in winter!" said Zan.

"I have never tasted them but I have heard of the delicious flavour when eaten with cold meats," replied Miss Miller.

"I can tell a beech from another tree by its leaves, but I don't know any of its growing points," added Zan.

"Well, the beech is not a very well-known tree—I mean it is not as commonly seen on the lawns, street-parquets, or parks, as the oak, maple, or elm. A beech tree often grows to be a hundred feet high and is from three to eight feet thick. Some have had a diameter of eleven feet. The bark is smooth, ash-coloured. The timber is fine grained and the roots of the tree do not go deep down, but spread out underneath the surface of the ground. The foliage of the beeches I have seen are purple, silver, and red. The name to designate the kind of beech tree is given by the colour of the leaves."

"There, that's ten trees!" called Nita.

"No, that only makes nine?" contradicted Jane.

The girls counted on their fingers and found there had been nine trees described so that they could always tell at a glance what the tree was.

"I am going to choose the tenth tree myself," said Miss Miller.

"Yes, yes, do!" cried the girls, in chorus.

"Well, I am going to select an elm. You won't see it here," laughed the teacher, as every head turned looking for the elm tree. "I am going to tell you about it and then see which of you can be first in identifying it by my description."

"That will be heaps of fun—I think that will be better than the way we have done!" exclaimed Elena.

The others felt much the same way, but said nothing as Miss Miller began.

"Our American elm, or white elm, is a majestic tree with long pendulous branches. The trunk grows from three to five feet through, and the tree's height is from fifty to seventy feet. The main trunk grows straight naked, until it towers above its neighbours. It then divides into two primary branches which ascend gradually and subdivide into spreading boughs. These again subdivide into smaller twigs, and the twigs into leaves.

"As the limbs grow out into smaller branches they bend in the most graceful curves, and the beautiful foliage gives a dense shade. The leaves are short-stalked, oval-shape, with irregular veins. The Elm flowers in April before its leaves begin to shoot. The timber is tough, strong and not easy to manipulate in cabinet work, therefore is not in such demand for this purpose."

"I believe I can pick an elm after that lesson," said Elena thoughtfully.

"Well, girls, we must get back to camp, but we will see who is the first to find an elm."

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## CHAPTER SIX

### THE MUTINY OF NITA

RETURNING to the Bluff, Miss Miller directed the operations for the night. Dinner was welcomed by all, as the bath and tramp through the woods had created a voracious appetite.

"I will build a fire on the lower ledge of rock where the smoke won't annoy us. In locating a spot for a fire-place it is always advisable to see to the comfort of the camp, for the wind may veer at any time and blow the smoke into the faces of the campers. If you can find a place with a natural shield to act as a screen, you obviate this disagreeable feature."

The girls stood about watching the Guide arrange her fire implements. She looked up and, seeing them unoccupied, said, "Zan, suppose you and Nita run to the house for the pans we left in the cupboard. Jane and Elena will go down to Bill's for a loaf of bread, won't you, dears? Hilda can help me with the fire."

"Dear me! Miss Miller, why don't you send some one besides me with Zan? I am too tired!"

whined Nita, peevishly.

"I have spoken, but you girls can act as you see fit!"

"All right, then; Zan, you take Hilda with you and I'll help Miss Miller," replied Nita.

Miss Miller began picking out the driest leaves and twigs while the girls stood uncertain of how to act.

"Well, why don't you start?" cried Nita to Zan.

"Waitin' for you!" said Zan laconically.

"Why, Hilda's going with you—I'm going to stay!"

"I must be rattled then, for I sure heard Miss Miller say that you and I were to go to the house," returned Zan, sitting down on a stone.

"But I am too tired and so Hilda's going with you." And Nita began to grow irritable.

"Miss Miller is Guide and I was elected Big Chief by all of you. Nita, you're Little Chief and in my absence you have to take my place. Now, I'm goin' down to Bill's and see if I can find any more strawberries for supper, and so I shall have to let you take my place going to the house. You can select any one of the other girls you want to go with you," said Zan, with finality.

Miss Miller had to bend low over the wood pile to keep her face from being seen. In fact, she had to hold her hand so close over her mouth that her face was crimson. Zan, without a backward look, started off at a brisk trot down the slope toward Sherwood's cottage.

"Hold on, Zan, we're coming with you!" shouted Jane and Elena.

That left Hilda standing sulkily watching her three friends while Nita went inside the tent apportioned to her use. Hilda turned to the Guide and caught a glimpse of her face. With a smile creeping into her own face she ran over to Miss Miller.

"Aren't you awful mad?" wondered Hilda.

"No, dearie, this is just what I expected when I suggested that Nita accompany Zan on the walk. It is merely another 'dish-wash' lesson in another form, but Nita hasn't had it applied to her individual need as Zan and Jane have. If she rises bravely to the call she will have her blessing hereafter."

"Oh, Miss Miller, how clever you are! I hope I will 'rise' to my call when it comes!" sighed Hilda, her admiration shining from her eyes.

The Guide laughed merrily as she replied, "I would rather no one else heard of my little plot—just keep it a secret!"

"I will, indeed, I will!" promised Hilda eagerly. Then, "What had I better do—help you at camp or go to the house?"

"Well, you see it is this way. I am only Guide. I tell you what I think ought to be done and Zan, as Big Chief, orders the camp. She has exactly the right idea of government and she will make a splendid organiser some day. I am so pleased at the attitude she took just now for Nita is her friend and she did not permit personality to interfere with duty. I also am delighted to find how she grasps the meaning of Woodcraft and hope this little lesson will prove beneficial to us all."

"Well, Zan said for Nita to take with her any of the girls she chose. Jane and Elena have gone to Sherwoods so Nita cannot choose any one but me."

"And has Nita gone?" queried the Guide, giving a look toward the tents.

"Why—n-oo!" returned perplexed Hilda. In another moment, however, light dawned and she smiled again. "I see! You will wait for Nita to make the first move."

Miss Miller nodded her head affirmatively and knelt down on the rock where she intended building her fire. Hilda waited.

"Please hand me those two green logs, dear—just behind me," asked the Guide.

Hilda took up one log after the other and gave them to Miss Miller, who placed them carefully in position.

"Now, watch me, Hilda, and then you can see how to build a good fire-place."

The logs were placed so that they formed a "V" with the wide part about twelve inches apart. As the logs were about three feet long and six to eight inches thick, their position left a three-cornered hollow between.

"Now those two forked saplings."

Hilda found the required articles which Miss Miller had cut down with the hatchet on the tramp that afternoon. They were straight young trees with the first branches forming the forks. The leaves and slender twigs had been lopped off leaving a stick of about four feet in length and having two sharp forks at the top. These saplings Miss Miller now chopped off at the bottom until she had formed a sharp spike on each end. She carefully prodded with one until she found a crevice in the rock where the point could enter. Then she bore down with all her strength and drove the stick into the ground.

"Why, you've got it close to the point of the logs!" exclaimed Hilda wonderingly.

The Guide laughed and took up the second sapling. This she drove in to the soil at the opposite

end of the logs. The forks were broadside to the length of the logs. Next, a stout but supple willow twig was selected from a small bundle, and laid across the top between the forks.

"Oh, my! Now I see what it is for!" cried Hilda, clapping her hands delightedly.

The utter ignoring of her presence and the clapping of Hilda's hands proved too much for Nita's disposition and she came out of the tent and walked down to the fire-place.

"What shall I do toward supper?" asked she sulkily.

"Oh, I thought Zan asked you to go to the house for her! Haven't you started?" asked Miss Miller in surprise.

Nita shrugged her shoulders and watched the interesting construction of the camp-fire.

"I'm too tired! Let Hilda go."

"But Hilda is helping me."

"Well, then let Zan go when she gets back. I'll start to spread a table-cloth on the flat rock over there shall I?"

"I really cannot change Zan's orders, you know. She is Big Chief, and I am only Guide."

"That's all nonsense, Miss Miller, and you know it! You have the right to order us to do just what you think best," snapped Nita.

"You're just a little bit mistaken about the law and order of a Woodcraft camp. Each one obeys!"

"Then Zan has failed!" exulted Nita. "She was told to go to the house and she went to Bill's instead. I should have loved to pick strawberries as well as she!"

"I hardly think you can call Zan's act one of disobedience. It was rather one of discipline," remarked the Guide.

"Who did she pretend to discipline—me?" sneered Nita.

"That had best be asked each one of herself. I can ask myself and truthfully say, "Yes, Zan has given me a good lesson in discipline for my future guidance.""

"Oh, pooh! You're only avoiding an unpleasant conversation with me! I know as well as any of you, that the whole plot is directed toward me. I wish to goodness I had never come with you!" And Nita flounced away in a temper.

"Why! Nita!" gasped Hilda in consternation, as she watched the retreating figure of her friend.

"Don't 'Nita' me! You're as thick with the rest as you can be! I always am selected to act as the scape-goat for anything you don't want to do yourself!" Nita flung back at Hilda.

The Guide kept on with the fire-building as if nothing had interrupted the lesson Hilda was receiving. She selected the driest bark and twigs in the heap of wild-wood and heaped them loosely in the pit formed by the two logs.

"Now, Hilda, you can fill the kettle from the spring up above here, and slip it over the willow until it hangs in the centre over the fire-place."

"I never knew what fun a camp-fire could be! Will it burn, do you think?"

Miss Miller laughed. "It wouldn't be a credit to me if it didn't!"

"But I can't see why you didn't lay the logs parallel?"

"I'll tell you. We have a small sauce-pan, a medium sized frying pan and a rather large pot. Now, the small pan goes on the narrow end, the frying pan on the centre where it fits, and the pot on the wider place. Then too, we can poke wood in and rake debris out of this wide mouth while the embers remain piled up at the corner inside. The judgment in using green wood comes from experience. Green wood does not burn, but reflects the heat of a fire, so that you get concentrated heat from embers piled up in a pit surrounded by green logs. Also, the top of green wood will hold pans and pots firmer than stones will, and a slippery stove is anything but desirable when potatoes are boiling or fat sizzling in a frying pan."

"Here comes the three girls! And I haven't done anything toward the supper," cried Hilda, running to the basket where the cutlery and dishes were kept.

"The loveliest berries, Miss Miller! Bill had some all ready for us and Mrs. Sherwood baked some of the dandiest biscuits when she did her own!" shouted Zan, as she climbed up the grade.

"How delicious they look!" exclaimed the Guide as she inspected the brown dainties.

"What's that?" asked Elena, spying the camp-fire.

The girls ran over and Miss Miller had to demonstrate the interesting construction. This over, Zan looked about and asked, "Didn't Nita get back yet? But say, who went with her?"

Not a word came in reply and Zan immediately comprehended matters. "I'll go now—will some one come with me?"

The two other girls offered and Hilda looked at Miss Miller. For answer, the Guide said, "Any two of you can help Zan. One will do for me."

"Let me stay now, Hilda, you were here when the fire-place was made," begged Elena.

"Zan, I think it may be wiser to get what is absolutely necessary to-night from Sherwood's. You

have already done more than your share of duty and another walk to the house and back is taxing the physical too much at present. A trip to the farmer's cottage will not over-tire any of you," suggested Miss Miller.

The girls sighed with relief, and started for the slope. When they returned to the Bluff with the required articles, the camp-fire had burned up and deposited a pile of red-hot embers in the pit to cook by. The potatoes were boiling noisily and a lump of butter was melting in the pan. The cloth had been spread and Elena was hulling berries.

"Where's Nita?" Zan whispered to the Guide.

"In her tent. She has not appeared since her last display of temper."

"Had I better go and tell her supper will soon be ready?" queried Zan.

"No—leave her absolutely alone. If she comes out of her own accord, the humiliation of accepting food she refused to help prepare, ought to humble her enough. But, Zan, to-morrow at our Council, we must speak of discipline and take up the matter of punishment and fines as outlined in the Manual. I had hoped this would be unnecessary in a small camp such as ours seemed to promise. However, all future mutiny must be provided for."

The supper ready, Miss Miller cheerily took her place and the four girls sat down about the cloth, leaving a vacancy where Nita should have been.

Before any one had had time to take up their napkin Miss Miller spoke.

"One thing I consider of paramount importance in any circle, or alone. It is not obligatory to any of you, merely a suggestion. I am not aware of the religious belief of any of you and it is not necessary to inform me, or discuss it with each other. I have found that discussion of religious beliefs generally leads to a difference of opinions that eventually create a bitter strife. True religion has no enmity in its teachings but produces harmony and happiness for all.

"I think that any one can find God by simply following the highest leading of their conscience. Gratitude to the Great Spirit is one of those leadings, but few take time to follow that light. I wish to ask that I be permitted to follow my sense of gratitude for all the good bestowed this day, and before partaking of the evening meal, I will close my eyes in silent prayer to the Giver of all my blessings. Each one of you can do as you feel is right about this idea, but do not speak or disturb any other's communion. In the morning, when we are gathered for breakfast, I shall ask for the same silent interval, to give gratitude for protection during darkness and sleep."

As she concluded, Miss Miller quietly closed her eyes and remained absolutely silent for several minutes. The girls looked at her and at each other without saying a word, then one after another closed her eyes and also gave thanks to God.

The Guide opened her eyes and waited reverently for her companions to finish their private thanksgiving and communion. Then, as all had concluded and opened their eyes again, she drew attention to a nearby tree by saying, "Hungry, Nita?"

Hiding, with a shame-faced expression in her eyes, Nita stood back of a tree near the supper. She advanced at the question.

"Your place is waiting, dear," added the Guide.

With an air of bravado, Nita sat down and began telling of a boy-cousin who had visited in the Rocky Mountains and had built a fire-place exactly like the one Miss Miller constructed.

The other girls seemed abashed at Nita's presence for a short time, but the Guide replied to the girl's hurried talk and soon the others were drawn into the general exchange of fun and story-telling.

"I'll wash the dishes," eagerly offered Nita, as the Guide rose to visit the fire and see if the water was boiling.

"All right, Nita, then the three girls who did double duty by going back and forth twice to Bill's can lay down on the moss and rest," assented Miss Miller, and that was all that was said to Nita about her habit of getting out of anything she was not inclined to do. The girls took their cue from the Guide and rolled over on the grass and watched.

"Elena, after the cloth is shaken fold it carefully in the right creases. That keeps it smooth and tidy. If it is folded regardless of ironed folds, it soon looks mussy and soiled. I will take charge of the left-overs from supper—thank goodness there isn't much—and Nita will wash and wipe the dishes."

The atmosphere of the camp resumed a serenity fully appreciated by all, for anger displayed by one made all wretched.

"Girls, we will try to get up at the hour we want to rise every morning this summer—five o'clock. It is now seven-thirty. Whenever you are ready to retire say so and we will sing a camp-fire lullaby," said Miss Miller, as the girls sat about the dying fire too tired to talk.

"I'm ready for bed now," ventured Elena.

"I feel as stiff as anything! My back feels as if it would break!" added Hilda.

The Guide laughed. "That's from swimming. You'll soon get over it if you practice every day."

"I hope to goodness I *can* swim to-morrow. The way I feel now, I should say I couldn't move in the water!" laughed Elena.

Nita said nothing but she must have felt as lame as the other beginners; as all seemed to long for bed, Miss Miller rose and smothered the few red coals by covering them with dead grey ashes.

"Never leave a camp-fire with a spark of fire in it. At early dawn, or at least past midnight, fire always revives and, unless its flame has been choked by outside means, it flares up and consumes anything in its reach."

"Miss Miller, I wonder why it is that, without apparent fuel or fanning, fire will renew itself during the wee hours of the night!" exclaimed Zan.

"I never heard, but it is an interesting suggestion, Zan. We'll have Elena make a note of that in her book so that we will remember to ask that question at Headquarters when we visit there."

"Do you ever expect to see them?" asked Hilda, meaning the officers of the Woodcraft Indians.

"Why, certainly! Don't you?" returned Miss Miller.

"I didn't know but that we'd be a nuisance. So many members call, I suppose," replied Hilda, with consideration.

"Hilda, that's very good of you. If every member was as thoughtful of the time of the Founders, how much better it would be."

No one stirred that night, for every one was healthily tired and repose was natural. Even Miss Miller set a small alarm clock to awake her at five, for she thought she might over-sleep during the cool hours of early morning.

At five, the ringing of the alarm awakened every one; while the girls yawned and wished it was midnight, the Guide jumped out of bed and looked at the wonderful appearance of Nature. Dew-drops sparkled in the rising sun, and the Falls sent forth a new note in its musical repertoire. Even the grey surface of rock seemed to be of warmer and softer material than it had been in the twilight.

"Girls! Up—up—up! The day is glorious!" called the Guide.

"So is the bed!" returned Hilda, yawning aloud.

"I just heard a crow laughing at you!" retorted Miss Miller.

"'He who laughs last laughs best,' I've heard said!" came from a smothered voice in Hilda's tent.

By this time the girls were thoroughly aroused and soon the talk consequent upon beginning a new day, came from the tents.

"Miss Miller, are you going to take a dip this morning before breakfast?" called Zan.

"No, I've already used the modern wash-basin by the creek," replied the Guide.

Nita and Elena came out and found Miss Miller brushing her hair before a tiny mirror that had been hung from a stump of a bough near her tent.

"Where's the basin you spoke of?" asked Hilda, also coming out.

"Over there by that laurel bush: I think it is Tennessee marble—it is veined exactly like it," said the Guide.

The girls ran over laughingly and found a great round stone partly in the water, and in the top of the stone, a nicely hollowed place about the size of an ordinary wash-basin. At one side a tiny hollow made an admirable soap-dish.

"How did you get water into it?" cried Nita.

"You'll find a tomato can near the bush!" replied Miss Miller.

"That's easy—but how under the sun did you empty out the water afterward?" called Zan.

"I didn't carry the basin to the woods and turn it over, I assure you," laughed Miss Miller; "I took a handful of dried moss and let it soak up the used water. You'll see how nicely it absorbs the moisture. Then take a handful of clean moss and wash the basin out."

"You are too fastidious for me—I'll wash in the brook!" said Zan, comparing the amount of work necessary in using the rock-basin, to the easier way of dipping in the creek.

"Guess we'll choose the brook!" said Hilda.

Miss Miller watched the five girls bending over and joyously splashing water at each other, as well as over their own faces and necks, and thought to herself: "Yes, I took a lot of trouble to use that basin, but they will always remember that dry moss will soak up moisture if a dry condition is required."

For breakfast that morning, the Guide mixed some batter for pancakes. The girls heard the beating of the spoon and gathered about curiously.

"Batter cakes, girls. I'll mix them this time, and one of you can watch them bake. The others can look after other work. I'll prepare some cocoa, if you like."

"Oh, yes! We all like cocoa, Miss Miller," said Hilda.

"Here comes Bill Sherwood—he's got something!" announced Elena, who had been standing on the rock above the fire.

The others craned their necks and Zan added, "Bet anything it's something good to eat!"

And so it was. Bill bobbed his head smilingly to the girls and offered Miss Miller a plate covered with a home-spun towel.

"The old lady fried some spring chicken for breakfast an' we said we rickoned it might taste good t' yuh—so here it is!"

"Broiled chicken! But, Mr. Sherwood, you must allow us to reimburse you for the chickens. It would not be right for us to eat your broilers!" said Miss Miller, deeply obliged.

"We likes t' make th' camp enjoyable t' yuh all! Mebbe you'll git straightened out so's yuh kin prepare your own things pritty soon," explained Bill.

"Why, we cooked supper last night—and a fine one it was," said Zan, pointing to the camp-fire.

Bill's lower jaw dropped and he stood staring at the novel cook-stove. "Laws me! That beats th' Dutch!" ejaculated he.

The girls all laughed and he went over and watched the kettle singing and the batter cakes baking. "I'll have t' send my ole woman up t' see these stunts!" said he, starting off again.

Batter cakes tasted fine with broiled chicken done to a crispy brown, and cocoa was just the right drink with which to conclude the jolly breakfast party.

Mrs. Sherwood had not yet visited the camp but she put in an appearance soon after breakfast and Zan introduced her to all of those present. She inspected the fire-place and looked sceptically at the cots, saying, "How kin yuh rest on them hard things. Now, I have to have feather beds all year 'round. And it's s'prisin' how my bones rest! I never kin go visitin' where folks haven't feathers!"

Miss Miller felt a deep sympathy for the poor deluded woman, and wondered if it would be possible to convert her to the idea of using a mattress and hair pillow in preference to feathers.

As their early visitor went back home, Zan said, "Fancy! feather-beds in this enlightened age!"

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WINNERS IN HOME-COOK AND MOKODASSO-WININI DEGREES

**D**URING breakfast, the girls commented upon the ability of the Guide to do anything and everything. As neither of the five girls had taken an interest in cooking while at home, the experience shown by the teacher, in preparing meals, astonished them.

Miss Miller tried to make everything she did an object lesson for the girls, so she mixed the simple batter for the cakes to show them how easy a matter a nicely browned cake really was. This, she deducted, would arouse a desire to know more of the cookery art. If she had selected a difficult dish to prepare the girls might have been frightened by the process of mixing many ingredients.

"I wish I could do some baking!" said Jane.

"Why not learn now—never a time like the present," said Miss Miller, smiling at the eager face.

"S'pose I burn something?"

"Then, try again. It is not with the first trial that we always meet success. Sometimes I have had to do a thing over and over before it was right," replied the Guide.

"It seems like an imposition to ask you to show us how to cook after all the other things you are doing for us," remarked Jane.

"Sometimes a little gratitude expressed in consideration for all one has done before, urges the donor to greater effort. And both giver and receiver are blessed accordingly," said Miss Miller.

The girls were thoughtful, so she continued, "I am so glad to find you appreciative of the little I am doing that I am eager to do more; the lesson in cookery will be one of my expressions of love toward you."

"Maybe we can all watch and learn how to do the biscuits," suggested Zan.

"Of course; as many of you as wish to take the test in cookery can begin this morning," replied Miss Miller.

"Right away?" clamoured a few of the girls.

"Hardly; I thought we would clear up the tents, do the chores, and try the use of the hatchet and knife; when it gets near time for noon-day meal we can prepare some fish for dinner. Hereafter, I think it wise to have dinner at twelve and supper at six. That gives us a long afternoon and a pleasant evening."

"We're ready for anything—where shall we tramp to-day to use the hatchet and knife?" said Hilda.

"We'll not tramp—we'll stay right here and build a cupboard to hold our edibles as they should be kept."

"A cupboard! What Humph!" and other exclamations showed the surprise the Guide's words

gave.

"Are we to chop down a few trees and lop off branches to secure the necessary lumber for the closet?" asked Nita, wondering if the idea would prove irksome or unpleasant.

"Not at all! I may decide to make lumbermen of you before the season ends but I'll not undertake it while you all feel so disinclined to do anything except what your idle fancy suggests. It will take a better understanding of the Law before you start on timber work."

The Guide spoke in a joking way but her words were aimed at Nita's habit of laziness and shirking duties.

"I wonder what Daddy would say if he could see us sawing wood and hammering nails?" said Zan, chuckling.

"My father would say, 'Here, Jane, don't spoil a perfectly good nail! A girl can't strike it on the head, ever!'"

"I never held a saw in my life," commented Elena.

"Can you saw wood?" asked Zan of the Guide with such vim that the others laughed heartily.

"Is that some of your slang or was it fact?" asked Miss Miller.

"I meant it—but it *is* slang, isn't it?" laughed Zan.

"Well, I'll reply—yes, I am very fond of carpentry. At home, I have a book-shelf, taborette, lamp-stand, and many little articles that I have made at different times."

"Well, come on, friends—let's get busy on Miss Miller's cupboard," said Hilda.

"Better finish the camp work first. If you girls think you can spare Zan and me, we will go to the house and find some suitable boards. I saw the tools necessary in the tool-house yesterday," Miss Miller said.

"Why, yes, we have lots of good boards in the cellar, and besides, there are some pieces of moulding and quarter-round in the hay-loft. The boys stored it there some years ago when they wanted to build some rooms in the loft. They never found time, as every day had some adventure for us when we were first here," explained Zan.

"And you girls can come to the house and help us carry the material to the Bluff, as soon as you finish the dishes and beds," said Miss Miller.

Zan and the Guide were soon in the low-ceiled cellar sorting pieces of lumber from a huge heap left there by the contractors when the old house was renovated. A number of desirable pieces were selected by Miss Miller who said, "We can take these pieces up to the back porch and take them to camp whenever we have need of them. I think we can make a number of articles that will prove useful."

"My! but you have some long boards there!" said Zan, her head on one side as she surveyed the load the Guide had piled up for use.

"We won't need many to-day for the cupboard, and we need not worry about the future," replied she, smiling.

"Then why not leave them down here?" asked Zan.

"I am not so comfortable down in this dark place with no air, that I would want to call often. We are here now, so the extra lumber can be taken to the upper air when the girls get here."

In a short time, Zan heard the girls' voices and she ran to the side garden to show them the way to the cellar from the back area. A trap-door folded down over the area steps when the entrance was not in use, and opened outward and fastened by means of hooks and screw-eyes to the arbour built over it.

Miss Miller was waiting for the girls and, after they came carefully down the steep stone steps, said, "Here are some boards that Zan and I want piled on the back porch. The ones for our cupboard we will leave to the last."

"I'll tell you what! Shall we tie the cupboard boards in a bundle and drag them across the grass to the Bluff?" cried Zan, as the idea flashed into her thought.

"Ha! Learning to use your thinking-machine, eh?" laughed the Guide. "But think again, unless you are pining to haul burdens."

"Let's get out of this vault with the boards and talk of machines upstairs!" said Hilda, stooping to take a long board.

Elena was close behind her and she also picked up a plank. A pile of kindling wood lay in Hilda's path and she found Nita and Jane in her way if she turned aside, so she endeavoured to climb over the wood. This would have been all right if the ceiling of the cellar had not been so low; as it was, the end of the board that tipped way up in front and down in the back, struck overhead, and threw Hilda backward. The board fell on the kindlings while Hilda stumbled over Elena, who was intent upon getting her plank to the cellar-door. Hilda's sudden impact made Elena drop her burden. Jane dodged the plank but Nita had no time, so the end of the board came down on her toe.

"Wouw! wough! Oo-hoo!" yelled Nita, dancing on one foot while she held the other foot in both hands.

Elena had bumped her head on some short boards Zan was about to carry out, and the expressions on both Elena's and Nita's faces were so funny that the others had to laugh although they immediately apologised for the lack of self-control.

"Well, I just guess you wouldn't see anything funny in *your* feet!" whined Nita, still holding her toe.

"We were not laughing at your funny feet, but at your ridiculous face!" retorted Jane.

"Perhaps we will all use more caution in our next attempt to get out of this," ventured Miss Miller, skirting about the girls and reaching the area steps with her lumber.

As no further sympathy was vouchsafed the two girls, they soon followed their companions up from the cellar. After all the extra lumber was piled up on the back porch, Miss Miller invited the labourers to rest under the front oak tree.

"As Zan was saying in the cellar, the next thing is to get our boards over to the Bluff," said Miss Miller, when the cool breeze had refreshed the girls.

"Zan said to tie them up and drag them over! Is there any difference between boards and bundles being carted by Nancy?" asked Hilda.

"Of course not! I forgot!" admitted Zan.

Miss Miller laughed at the relief shown in the faces around her. Also, at the progress the girls were making in the use of their thoughts.

"Dear, dear! That means some one will have to get Nancy!" continued Zan, after a minute's pause.

"But your private wire from the house to the cottage is not out of commission, is it?" asked the Guide.

"No-oo! but how will Nancy get here unless Bill leads her?" wondered Zan.

"Bill has to visit the garden and out-houses every morning, he said yesterday, to see if there is anything wrong. Why not ascertain on the 'phone if he has left his home. If not, he can ride Nancy over and we can use her going back; at the Bluff we can let her go down to her stall alone."

Before any comments could be given, Zan had jumped up and was running toward the house to call up Bill.

While waiting for the farmer to bring Nancy, the Band members went to the tool-house and selected what material might be needed at camp. In one corner of the place stood a partly demolished express wagon, such as children play with. Miss Miller saw it in a glance. It also happened that Zan saw it.

"Say, Miss Miller, won't the dragging boards cut up all the grass? Besides, Nancy can't climb over stone walls and snake fences!" declared she.

"What would you advise?" came from Miss Miller.

"Take the wheels of that broken wagon and tie two under the front of the lumber and two under the back end. Then, Nancy can go around by the road and up to Sherwood's cottage, where we can let her drag it up the slope."

"Splendid! Zan, you may consider yourself promoted into the class of advanced thinkers!" commended the Guide.

Zan smiled with pleasure and Hilda remarked in a teasing voice, "Hump! just see Zan preen her feathers!"

The wagon was quickly taken apart and pieces of wire found in the closet which was a catch-all. By the time Bill came up the road with Nancy, the impromptu vehicle was ready to hitch to the horse.

Bill chuckled at sight of the dray, and tipped his old farm hat on one side of his head. "That there's another patent o' th' teacher's, hain't ut?" chuckled he.

"Nop! This time you've got to hand me the bouquet!" smiled Zan, proudly.

"Wall, yuh gals'll all be comin' along fine, pritty soon, with such a smart lady as Miss Miller," commented Bill.

He watched the party drive Nancy down the road with the funny wheeled apparatus rattling after, and then went on to inspect the gardens and out-houses.

It was the first time that the members of the Band had walked along the road that ran through a section of the farm. When they neared Sherwood's place, a small section of woodland lay before them. The shade was dense and the ground damp as the location was rather low at the foot of the slope. Fern grew to a great height and wild flowers of every kind blossomed profusely.

"Almost feels like the forests in Florida," said Jane, who had visited the southern part of Florida with her mother.

"Have you ever named these woods?" Elena asked Zan.

"No, we never come this way, much," replied Zan.

"Then let's call it 'Everglades'—it's a lovely glade and the dampness and luxuriant vegetation will bear us out in the name," suggested Elena.



"Now, perhaps, as we have had lots of rain this season; but you'd find it a far different glade during July and August of a dry season," replied Zan.

When the travellers reached the bridge that spanned the creek, and looked up at the Bluff from a new point of view, they were surprised to see how high their camp seemed to be above the road.

"I didn't know the camp was visible from the road," said Nita.

"I had never noticed the road from the Bluff, did you, Miss Miller?" asked Hilda.

"No, I hadn't thought of looking for it, yet I knew it must be in plain sight, as it runs by Bill's cottage and that is in full view from our tents."

"Let's sit down on the bridge and rest a bit before taking that climb," suggested Nita.

"I never did see any one get as tired as you do, Nita. When it is anything that you don't particularly fancy, you are the most tiredest person!" said Zan, impatiently.

"Well, come to think of it, I don't see why it was necessary for me to help when there are so many other useless hands here—Nancy is doing all the work!" retorted Nita.

"You'd better get rid of all the ire you have stored up, Nita, for we are going to pay fines for every mistake—I said mistake for politeness' sake—after our next council!" warned Zan.

Nita laughed musically, but Zan knew that laugh and was aware that Nita was in one of her most stubborn moods.

She sat down on the heavy cross-bar of the bridge to rest but the other girls had no desire to wait, and Nancy kept on going until the foot of the slope was reached. Here, the wheels were removed and the load of wood was dragged up by the ropes.

With the lumber deposited on the Bluff, Nancy was given a piece of sugar and discharged from duty. The old horse stood watching the girls for a short time until Zan spied her standing in the foot-path that led down to the cottage.

"Just look at that horse? Did you ever see a more intelligent look in a dumb animal's eyes? She seems to say, 'What under the sun did you want those old boards for—I'm going to wait and see!'"

The others turned and laughed at Nancy's look. At that the old horse turned and went down the hill.

"There, now she's insulted at our laughter!" said Miss Miller.

The girls undid the rope that held the wood together, while the Guide went to her tent and gathered her books and papers. Coming back to the group she said, "We will hold a council before further work or play is proposed."

"But Nita isn't here—she stopped on the bridge," said Jane.

"I'm afraid Nita will be tardy then, or perhaps miss the meeting altogether!" replied the Guide, positively.

The girls were beginning to understand their teacher better than they had ever thought of comprehending any one; not from her words, for she did not need to say much when her face and voice expressed so much. Thus, they knew that the council called was because of Nita's delinquency.

"Zan, as Big Chief, you will call the roll," said Miss Miller.

This was done and Elena was called upon to read the entries in the Tally Book.

"Now, girls, we must recognize our obligation to each other and not feel as if this camp was started for pure pleasure and indolence. We must feel that a certain amount of fun combines with study or work to make the time well spent. I detest this constant nagging or advising, and regret that it seems necessary to talk so much about duty. I wish to call your attention to a page in the Manual of Woodcraft that I had no idea would ever be needed for us, under the sub-title of Law and Punishments."

The girls looked at each other in dismay. To think that one of their small number should make it necessary to take up the question of punishment!

Miss Miller read: "Punishments are meted out by the Chief and Council, after a hearing of the case. They consist of: Exclusion from the games or boats for a time. Reduction in rank, or of fines, etc. The extreme penalty is 'death'; that is, banishment from the Tribe. Elena, enter these items in the Tally Book."

Silence reigned when Miss Miller finished speaking.

"It is high time our Council took note of the stubborn conduct of one of its members. Last night we were submitted to certain unpleasantness but later the cause of it appeared contrite. Twice to-day the appearance of undesirable qualities has turned our thoughts from duty and pleasure. Now, the Chief is empowered to write down a copy of these fines and place them in Little Chief's possession. Fine will be omitted for any cause occurring before she reads of the Council's decision. After that, penalty will be served on any one committing a fault or omitting a given duty."

Miss Miller was the stern teacher of the school-class as she spoke and the girls felt the same awe with which she inspired them at school.

Nita could not be seen on the bridge or along the road, so Zan placed the paper in their tent on

Nita's pillow.

"The Council is adjourned," said the Guide, and they got up with pleasure.

"Now for the cupboard!" cried Miss Miller.

The boards were measured off the same length, and some of the girls began sawing them along the pencil-lines. When the boards had been approved, the two sides were nailed to a bottom section. Then, a top was fastened to the sides. The girls were beginning to thoroughly enjoy the construction work and every one was eager to nail the back on the frame just made. It therefore became necessary for the four to take turns in placing a narrow board at the back. As four boards covered it exactly, one girl after the other took her board and attached it. But Jane had the last board and found it much easier to nail down than the first girl did.

While the back was being fastened firmly, Miss Miller whittled and cut six strips of moulding. These she divided, one for each girl and two for herself. The first two she nailed inside the cupboard on marks made on the side lengths of the boards. The girls saw at once that these strips were rests for the shelves.

Three girls nailed their strips on very nicely, but Zan, impatient to get through with hers, drove the last nail in so that it bent double and forced the strip down from the pencil-line.

"Oh, bother! Will that do, or must I pull the nail out?" asked she, looking up at Jane, who was watching the work.

"Guess Miss Miller wouldn't give a reward for *that!*" said Jane, meaningly.

"Well, out she comes!" and Zan took the hammer and turned it about to use the forked end on the nail. The head of the wire nail was not broad and the hammer stripped it, leaving the remains of the wire still sticking in the wood.

"Did you ever! I s'pose the old thing will come off altogether, next!" grumbled Zan.

She tried the hammer in every conceivable position but the nail seemed to be stuck for good. "I'll get you this time!" added Zan, placing the hammer under the strip and bending back the handle of the tool until suddenly the strip cracked and half of it came out with the hammer while the carpenter rolled backward.

Miss Miller and the girls came over to see the cause of the commotion and the Guide soon found that impatience and carelessness had made extra work for Zan and delayed the work.

Zan fully appreciated the cause of the accident and felt repentant the moment she saw the damaged strip.

"Miss Miller, my besetting sin did that! Please let me whittle a new strip while the girls and you continue making the doors. I was just crazy to work on those doors and screw on the hinges, but I'll do the other work as a punishment for impatience?"

Miss Miller heartily approved this attitude and smiled.

"Oh, you needn't show how glad you are that I realise my fault—I find it much pleasanter to obey my own dictated punishment than if *you* had to suggest it!" added Zan, frankly.

The Guide and Zan's companions laughed, for it was a candid statement of truth. Who wouldn't prefer to endure their own suggested punishments than follow some one else's?

"In case your punishment is not sufficient to humble yourself and cure the fault, let us prescribe again," said Miss Miller.

"Foregoing the delight of screwing on those hinges is almost more than I can stand," said Zan, expressing deepest regret in her voice.

The others laughed again and began work on the anticipated treat.

Zan finally whittled a strip similar to the Guide's and this time it was nailed on accurately. The hinges were on the two plain boards that would act as doors of the cupboard and Miss Miller held one in place while the girls screwed them to the side boards. When both doors were on, the finishing touch was the screwing on of a bolt.

Elena whispered something to Miss Miller and the Guide smiled at Zan, who had stood watching the completion of the closet. "We think that your punishment was more severe than the crime, so it is suggested that you be allowed to put in the last screw. Here is the bolt."

"Wh-eee!" squealed Zan, as she jumped to take the screw-driver from Jane and sat down in front of the door and began to fasten the bolt to the door. The others stood close behind and watched, thereby failing to see Nita creep up through the woods and go in her tent.

"Done, giminy crickets! Isn't it a peach!" cried Elena, her hands clasped in admiration.

"Did that rule become effective—about slang?" asked Zan, comically.

"That was an important matter the Council failed to discuss this morning," admitted the Guide.

"Well, don't inflict punishment to-day—the cupboard is too much for my balance!" begged Elena.

"Then one day's grace is allowed the three members who are so given to crime. Hereafter, the fulness of the law will be meted out!" returned Miss Miller.

"The Chief will have to punish herself some more," laughed Hilda.

While some of the girls shifted the cupboard up to the spot near the fire-place where it would be

most convenient, Miss Miller walked over to the tents to replace the papers and book of the Band. She thought she saw something move in Zan's tent, and going over found Nita on the cot, pretending sleep.

When the Guide rejoined the girls she said nothing about finding Nita in the tent. The girls, however, were too busy to notice anything in the Guide's expression and the moment she was within hearing, Zan cried, "Ants! Miss Miller, what shall we do to keep out bugs?"

"And supposin' it rains hard! Won't the water leak in?" wondered Jane, examining the wide chinks.

"I'm afraid it will," laughed the Guide.

The girls stared at her and Hilda asked, "What was the use wasting time on something that leaks?"

"But you've learned the use of tools and constructed a useful article as well. The cupboard will prove most useful as you will find," replied Miss Miller.

"There then, Elena, you've got a swell entry for the Tally Book!" announced Zan.

"And Zan is making most of her day of grace!" laughed Miss Miller, looking at her watch.

"How long did it take us, Guide?" asked Hilda.

"What time do you think it is?" asked Miss Miller.

"Must be 'most eleven," ventured Jane.

"Oh, no, it isn't more than ten," added Elena.

"It is ten minutes to one!" announced the Guide.

The girls were amazed. "Where *did* the morning go?" Zan wondered.

"So, you see, we must prepare lunch. And I was so eager to take you over to the garden and look over the vegetables to select some for our meals," said Miss Miller, with regret.

"And Nita's not back yet! I forgot all about her in the fun over the cupboard," said Zan, looking toward the bridge.

"Nita is in her tent. She was there when I returned to my tent with the papers," said Miss Miller, quietly.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### WHAT HAPPENED DURING A THUNDER STORM

**N**o further remarks were made to Nita, but every one wondered if she realised the importance of the written law which had been pinned to her pillow where she must have seen it.

For the next hour the Band was very busy preparing dinner and then removing its traces. Nita did not join them and no one felt inclined to go and coax her out of her sulks.

The food was placed in the cupboard and Miss Miller made two propositions: A walk to Baldy Pate on a Nature Quest, or a swimming lesson. As both could be enjoyed, it remained for the girls to say which should be first.

Zan explained. "If we go on a hike we'll be warm on our return and a swim will feel good and cool us off."

The others agreed, so Hilda was sent for the whittling knife and Zan for the hatchet. Miss Miller went to her tent and took a small bottle of chloroform and several layers of absorbent cotton, besides a few specimen boxes and a butter-fly net. Jane had a note-book in case they wished to enter any items. Nita had not appeared, so the Band started without paying any attention to her, knowing it to be the kindest procedure in the end.

They had not gone a hundred yards when Miss Miller suggested that each one go a different direction through the woods and meet on the top of Baldy to rest and relate experiences.

The idea met with approval and each one started alone to find a new and adventurous way leading to the mountaintop.

While the members of the Band were blazing unique trails leading to the top of Baldy Pate, Nita crept from her tent and read the note which had been pinned to her pillow. She threw it down on the ground and stamped upon it with her heel, simply because there was no other way to vent her spite on the innocent paper. Looking about for something to do, she spied the cupboard. With a shrug of her shoulders, she ran over and flung open the door. She was famished for food, so she took all she wanted to eat and threw the rest out in the pool where the current soon carried the bread and lighter edibles away, but the heavy particles sunk to the bottom. Finding nothing she could do to cause discomfort to the other girls, she decided to take a walk along the road she had seen when she rested on the bridge. The sun was blazing down, so Nita took a sun-shade she found in Miss Miller's tent and started on her lonesome adventure. But she felt sure there must be some other estates near the Baker Farm, and perhaps she might meet some young folks—who knows!

Miss Miller, being an adept in the woods, reached the top of Old Baldy some time before the girls did. As she sat on the high brow of Baldy admiring the wide view down the valley, she followed with her eyes the ribbon of silvery water that wound from the Big Bridge, through the woods, coming out in a great green meadow where many horses grazed. A yellow roadway ran parallel to the stream where it issued from cover of the woods, and Miss Miller saw a tiny form—or it seemed tiny from that distance—carrying a purple parasol, and beside her stood an English dog-cart with a young man in it. Miss Miller wondered where she had seen a purple sun-shade something like that one! She had not noticed particularly the one Zan took from the house in case it would be needed some time for Miss Miller's comfort.

The Guide then looked about her and found the mountaintop covered with low bushes of berries. "Blue berries—so early!" exclaimed she, and began picking them while waiting for her charges' arrival.

One after another the girls came up their particular trail, with stories of what they had seen on the way. While waiting for Elena to appear, they lay in the short grass on the summit. Miss Miller had filled her butterfly box with berries and now sat down.

"The clouds over the valley seem to threaten a storm," said she, turning about to examine the sky overhead and behind her.

"I thought I heard a faint rumble a moment ago," added Hilda.

"Oh, no, you didn't," replied Zan. "That was a farm-wagon rumbling over the Big Bridge."

"Where is the Big Bridge, Zan? We haven't seen it yet, have we?" asked Jane. Thus the subject was turned from any reminder of the storm.

"No, it is down at the end of our property just where it connects with Hamilton's place. The river is quite wide there, as several small streams flow into it after it leaves Bill's place."

"Girls, if we had a few more berries, I could make a berry pudding," said Miss Miller.

"Then we'll pick some more," returned Elena, rolling over to rise to her feet.

As she did so she came directly under a berry bush and took hold of it to assist herself in rising. A piercing scream frightened her companions speechless.

"Augh! A snake! I grabbed hold of a nasty old snake!" she yelled, shaking herself and trying to wipe the contaminated hand on the grass in a mad frenzy.

The others ran over to see the snake and Zan said, "He didn't bite, did he?"

"Mercy no! Wasn't it bad enough to feel his body wriggle!" sputtered Elena, nauseated at the remembrance of the touch.

"Don't think of it again! Quick, Elena, change your thought and think of something else!" came from Miss Miller, as she shook Elena suddenly, to make her take notice.

"Eh—what!" said Elena, wondering at the Guide's queer action, but at the same time forgetting to be ill.

"Show me where it went! Hurry—quick! I want to catch it for observation!" Miss Miller said, excitedly.

"That way—under the laurel! But mercy sakes, Miss Miller! Don't go near the horrid thing!" cried Elena, now forgetting her nausea in her anxiety to keep the Guide from the snake.

Miss Miller ran over to the bush followed closely by Elena and the other girls. No sign of the snake could be seen as, of course, the Guide knew it would have slipped away long before.

She turned with a sigh of disappointment to find Elena as eager to see the reptile again as the others were.

"Feeling quite right again, Elena?" asked Miss Miller, smiling at the girl.

"Wh-y, ye-es! But ugh! It was slippery!" replied Elena.

"Then you forgot to use your 'ready help'! What an opportunity for you to have won a point in advance of the others. I was the only one who took advantage of it, so I am ahead in this race," said Miss Miller.

"What do you mean?" asked Zan, puzzled.

"Wouldn't you have screamed and shaken it off, had a snake slid down on your hand?" queried Elena, amazed.

"If I felt startled, I doubtless would, but I would also have applied 'ready help' the moment I felt as ill over the incident as you seemed to be. As it was, not one of you appreciated the circumstances to help, so I had to step in."

"But, Miss Miller, you didn't do a thing!" exclaimed Jane.

"No? I made Elena, as well as all of you, think of something entirely foreign to the snake. By rousing your interest in another object, you unconsciously overcame the nausea, and later, I gradually drew your thoughts back to the very object that seemed to cause your illness, but in what a different frame of mind you examined the idea the second time. Well, girls, after all is said and done, it gets down to using our 'thinking machine more' does it not?" laughed the Guide.

"I guess you're right again—you may go to the head of the class," declared Zan.

"Do you know, girls, if I was President of this land I would have a law made that would make it imperative for every man, woman, and child to *think!* First of all, to think of what God means to us. Second, to think of what life means. Third, what does brotherhood really mean. Fourth, and all, inclusive, to think more of what can be done to improve the child! The child who will be the future citizen—a father or mother of future generations! Oh, I tell you, it will take *thinking* to lift the curse of the world, and then when one has thought deeply, to put into execution the good things that came to one in deep thinking!"

The girls smiled at what they considered Miss Miller's hobby, but they also admired her vastly for such thoughts.

While the talk drifted into other channels, Jane and Elena sought for and found some beautiful butterflies which they placed carefully in the boxes. As they turned to go back to their companions, Elena had an inspiration.

"Jane, you know it is Miss Miller's birthday the end of this month—what do you say to our making her a lovely tray with some of our best butterflies?"

"Tray? How would you make it?" wondered Jane.

"Why, we can send in to one of the department stores and buy the wooden frame with the glass and back ready-made. By grouping grasses and butterflies artistically on the cotton under the glass, and screwing the back on again, we would have a beauty!"

"Sure! That'll be fine, Elena! And why can't we try for a *coup* at the same time?"

So the girls decided to write that night and send for the tray, keeping the whole plan a secret from the others.

Just before the two hunters rejoined the others, a sudden peal of thunder startled every one. Miss Miller looked at the sky with apprehension in her eyes.

"Dear me, it is black as ink over Baldy and those two girls haven't come back yet!" cried she.

"It's surely coming up fast—when a storm comes in that direction, it's generally a hummer, too!" said Zan.

The sun, which had been shining brilliantly, now was partially obscured by the scudding clouds, and Miss Miller was about to shout for the missing girls when they appeared running through the bushes.

"We're too far from camp to make it in time, Miss Miller, and there's no other shelter near, is there?" called Jane.

"Oh, yes! I forgot to tell you what I found on my trail here," replied Zan, hurriedly. "Bob and Fiji discovered a cave last summer but they would never take me there. I tried to locate it but failed. On my way through the woods I accidentally found the great opening under the rock and stopped a moment to investigate. It will easily shelter every one of us!"

"All right, Zan—lead on quickly!" ordered the Guide.

The woods became as dark as evening while the peals of thunder crashed down and forks of lightning shot about the girls as they ran single file along the faint trail made by Zan.

"Dear me, Zan, I felt a drop! We will be deluged if you have much farther to take us!" cried Miss Miller.

"We're almost there—keep up your courage and win a *coup!*" laughed Zan, trying to cheer the others.

Then after a few more turns in and about the giant trees, she cried, "Here it is—tickets, please! Have them ready!"



**JANE AND ELENA COLLECTING  
BUTTERFLIES.**

*The Woodcraft Girls at Camp.*

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It took but a minute for the others to fly after the leader into the dark interior of the cave. It was made by some huge rocks leaning against each other with tree-trunks to brace them from rolling down when the earth had been washed away from underneath. Situated in the side of the steep cleft of the ravine, with the opening toward the valley, it proved an admirable refuge.

After every one had assured herself that there was no immediate danger of the whole side crashing in upon them, Zan explained how the boys used to play Indians and camp out on fine nights. They had a few plates and pans on a narrow ledge in the cave, and some hemlock greens furnished a bed.

"How far from camp is the cave?" asked the Guide.

"Oh, about half a mile! We can follow down the ravine and get to our camp without trouble when it clears off," said Zan.

The rain swept down the mountain-side in torrents, while livid fire flashed in at the mouth of the cave accompanied by crash upon crash of deafening thunder. Miss Miller saw that a few of the girls were timid and looked fearfully about at the rock-ribbed walls of the cave to see if they were still in place.

"Don't you girls love to hear thunder roll and crack forth like the sound of cannon?"

"You really don't mean that you *like* thunder, Miss Miller?" gasped Elena.

"Why, yes, don't you? I think the privilege of watching lightning is one to be taken advantage of every time it is offered."

"But it is so dangerous! Suppose you were struck?"

"I know that the Great Spirit governs our destinies and I have no more to fear from a streak of lightning, if I am sensible, than I would have from yonder tall pine," said the Guide.

"But that pine is dangerous, too, in a storm!" said Elena.

"Then let's say, for a figure of speech, my bathtub at home. That I am as safe out there as at home."

"Oh, well, that's different. Every one knows a bathtub is perfectly safe, while lightning isn't," declared Jane.

"I see! Then it resolves itself into familiarity with the things you *know* about—and the danger of lightning is in its elusiveness at being studied and not in its power?" laughed Miss Miller, pleased at the way the girls walked in the trap.

"Mother always closes the doors and windows during a storm and won't let me sit on the porch,

either. Why is that?" asked Elena, while the other girls forgot their fear in the interesting discussion under way.

"Some people say that a place might be struck unless tightly closed. I have even heard of folks that refused to have a lamp or light lighted during a storm, for fear the lightning would follow the path of light. But that is sheer nonsense. The only thing that *might* occur from wide-opened doors and windows is the strong current of wind that would tear along the floor if the draft was strong enough. This might conduct the lightning, especially if the rain blew in with the wind, for water is a great conductor of electricity. Sometimes, the clouds hang very low and the dart might possibly follow the line of least resistance. The notion that it will follow in the pathway of a light, is on the face of it an absurdity, for electricity itself is so much brighter than a pale shaft from a lamp or gas-jet can be, that it would never see the latter. Then, too, it would be allowing electricity to have intelligence to *see* a pathway of light, and that would be paganism. All intelligence comes from God, the Spirit, and no current of force, or object of material sense can rob Spirit of its prerogative. When we sift out many fears we find them actually based on old superstitions that have in some way been handed down since the days before the Christian Era."

"Miss Miller, why is it that a barn is more often struck than a house in town?" asked Jane, after a short silence.

"I am glad you thought of that, because it is interesting. It is a positive fact that very few accidents by lightning are recorded in large towns or cities. Not because there are no tall buildings or spires for the bolt to follow, but for some unknown reason lightning does not touch thickly populated places but seeks out solitary objects in the country, or on mountains and plains. Probably the farmers know this and that is why almost every dwelling in the country has a lightning-rod at the corners of the roof. Too, I have often thought that the chemicals generated by the cattle that stand in a barn have much to do with attracting electricity. I have even compared cases and find that a barn where the cows or horses are present, is struck and a vacant barn that has not been in use for a time, is left intact."

"Maybe you can tell us why pine trees are struck when the other trees are left without a mark? I have seen pine trees torn and splintered—ten to one of other trees," said Zan.

"Generally, a pine tree grows up straight and tall above its fellows about it. A pine having rosin in its sap should prove a non-conductor for the shaft, so I should say that the cause of its often being a victim to lightning must come from the fact that its spire pierces the low-hanging clouds passing over it and thus letting the electricity out to follow the object that entered the proscribed place. The higher on a mountain-side the pine grows, the oftener you will find one shattered. But I have noticed that other tall trees growing on high places, are as often struck, if the pine is not as tall as the companion trees."

"Miss Miller, who thought of the lightning-rod?" asked Zan.

"Why, my dear, don't you know? I thought every grammar school child remembered our good old Benjamin Franklin for that! He it was who brought it down into subjection for mortals to use. Before that time, people actually believed that God sent it for a warning. In these days, the man we call the Wizard of Electricity, Thomas Edison, has been able to harness it for practical purposes to lighten labour and extend the luxuries of living to mankind."

"I suppose we will experiment some day, and find out that lightning is no more dangerous than the rain-drops," ventured Hilda.

"It doesn't appear to be imminent though!" laughed Jane.

"What makes lightning, Miss Miller?" asked Elena.

"It is caused by a sudden discharge of atmospheric electricity. The identity of lightning was discovered by our Benjamin Franklin in America and Romas in France. There are several kinds of lightning, forked lightning being the dangerous kind. Heat lightning is seen in the skies at night after an unusually hot day. Sheet lightning spreads over a great surface and is of various colours. Chain lightning is swift, in long rippling lines looking like links of a chain. Globular lightning is a ball of fire and travels slower than the former kinds."

The girls were intensely interested in the teacher's explanations, but the rain was ceasing and the thunder sounded farther off.

"Some day we will take up the subject of electricity and look thoroughly into its claims. When you find out more about it you will lose much of your dread of it. The same plan might be adopted by Elena and the snakes. The more she knows about reptiles the less she will fear them, and the more interesting they become. You will look upon them as the living creature formed by the Creator. Then, you will unconsciously extend to them the admiration due them for their various ways of doing good to the earth upon which they live."

"Ugg! Who could ever admire a snake! After the way that slippery thing felt when I had a grip on it! I shall never want to hold one again," said Elena, shuddering.

"That is why I mentioned it again. If you girls had ever studied that form of life you would be surprised how beautiful and interesting snakes are. Maybe we will find time to catch a few specimens and watch them in captivity. I brought a splendid magnifying glass with me, and several pads for taking down notes. We can rig up a small shack and construct some furniture for it; it will be our scientific bureau where all our insects and other interesting data can be prepared and kept."

"Your plan sounds awfully jolly, if you don't make us catch the snakes!" said Elena.

"When it comes to providing the specimen we will take turns," replied the teacher.

The shower passed over as quickly as it had arisen, so the Band decided to start for Camp. The ground had been very dry and the rain soaked in rapidly, leaving the surface comparatively dry.

"I wonder if Nita was frightened at the shower?" said Zan, as they followed her down the trail.

"I'd rather have had company on that Bluff—but it is her own fault," said Hilda.

"Oh, girls, see the rainbow—isn't it a beauty!" exclaimed Miss Miller at this point.

The girls all stopped and admired the wonderful hues in the bow and Jane asked, "What makes a rainbow, Miss Miller?"

"Look, girls! There's another one—right near the other!" cried Zan, pointing.

"There usually are two, according to the brilliancy with which the sun reflects upon the opposite clouds when they are resolved into rain. Look at those two carefully! See the lower one is brighter than the second one. Also look quickly before it fades and see that the colours are reversed in their order; and in one, red is the highest colour, while violet is strongest in the second."

The girls stood straining their eyes to see things they had not thought of before. Miss Miller waited a moment to give them time to verify her statements, then she said, "Every rainbow has seven arcs presenting the seven colours of the solar spectrum. Sometimes the moon will produce rainbows but they are of very pale colouring. I could tell you all about the degrees and rays that go to elucidate facts about a rainbow, but you would only be in a maze when I was through, so I will tell you the simple fact of causation, then some other time we might go into the subject from a scientific basis.

"A rainbow is produced by the decomposition of the white light of the sun when it passes into the rain-drops, then reflecting from their inside face; or when solar light passes into drops of water under a certain angle.

"When we are placed at a certain angle on the earth, we look up at the spot where the rainbow is said to be, and the sun shining opposite it produces on the retina the sensation of colours. You never see a rainbow at high noon, yet the rays of the sun are intense enough. But there is no reflection at noon, upon clouds that you can see. There may be a rainbow at that time somewhere in the clouds, but *you* can't see it.

"The geysers in the National Park out West produce the same phenomenon, but in not such brilliant colourings. Sometimes, a double rainbow appears over Niagara Falls, and on almost any clear day you can see one large rainbow."

The girls listened to the interesting explanation while following the Guide down through the ravine. As they neared the Bluff, the sun began shining again in unclouded brightness, and only the drops of water on leaves and rocks told one of the shower.

Arrived at camp, everything was found to be in good condition, the tents having shed water beautifully; the Guide's selection of site proved wise inasmuch as the rain drained away from all sides of the spot where the tents stood.

Zan ran to her tent to see if Nita was sleeping. But no one was there. She came out again and looked at Miss Miller in astonishment. The Guide expected to hear that Nita had gone to bed to hide her ears from the thunder, and was surprised when Zan told her that Nita was not to be seen.

"She took refuge with Sherwoods' when the first peal of thunder sounded," said Miss Miller.

"I'll run down and let her know we are back. If she wishes to join us, all right, but I won't coax her to," whispered Zan, and the Guide nodded her approval.

But Zan came back alone after a long interval. She expressed concern in her face when Miss Miller asked about Nita.

"Mrs. Sherwood said she saw one of the girls coming down her foot-path with my mother's purple sun-shade. She was surprised and watched her go along the road that leads to the Big Bridge."

"There, now! That is where I saw that purple parasol! I sat on top of Baldy while waiting for you girls and as I looked at the valley view I spied a tiny form walking along the road with a dash of purple over her head. I sat wondering where I had seen a purple sun-shade—it seemed quite recently. But now I remember you carried one from the house when you brought some of the luxuries," said Miss Miller.

"How far is the Big Bridge, Zan?" asked Jane.

"Let's walk down there and meet Nita," suggested Hilda.

"Oh, the Big Bridge is at the extreme end of the farm and divides Hamilton's stock-farm from ours. If Nita walked as far as that, she would naturally seek shelter at Hamilton's. And Mr. Hamilton would send her here in a machine, or let one of his hostlers drive her back. Nita wouldn't walk back—it's too far for her," said Zan.

"Well, then, as the afternoon is far spent, what do you girls say to our daily swim? We can't start a lesson on gardening to-day, and I don't believe that any of us want to sew until we are satiated with farm-life and country sights," ventured the Guide.

"We'll all vote for a swim—the rain has swollen the creek so that the Falls will make lots of fun for



us in the pool," cried Zan, delightedly.

"That's so! I never thought of that!" exclaimed Hilda.

"Hurry up, get undressed!" ordered Zan.

"Will the pool be perfectly safe if it is deeper?" Elena asked timidly.

"Safe as ever—nothing is safe unless you master it!" added Miss Miller, going to her tent to don her bathing-suit.

"We never thought to write for bathing-suits! We'll have to wear our union suits again," called Zan, as she entered her tent.

"I remembered while I was cooking supper last night and I intended drawing your attention to the matter again without directly reminding you, but Nita's actions caused the subject to fade away. This morning I recalled it again while I was washing, then I forgot again," admitted the Guide.

"I'll just hang a note on my tent-flap—then I'll sure remember to write when I get in," declared Zan.

The bath that day was enjoyed by all, and Elena almost overcame her timidity of the water. Hilda found she would float naturally if she relaxed the tension of her fear thought and let herself go in the water. It was a fine sensation—finding the water would buoy her upon its face.

After the girls had dressed and Miss Miller planned for supper, they wondered where Nita could be! She should have been back if Hamilton's expected to drive her over.

"Zan, if these neighbours have a telephone, can you go to Bill's house and 'phone?" asked Miss Miller, unwilling to admit that she was worried over the girl's absence.

"Bill's wire doesn't connect with anything but our house, but I will run there and get Hamilton's and find out where Nita is," said Zan, jumping up.

"Jane will go with you for company's sake," said Miss Miller.

Evidently, the information Zan heard on the telephone was of a most uncomfortable kind, for she hurried back to the Bluff without speaking of it to Jane, who was supposed to be with her for company's sake.

"Miss Miller, please come over here a moment!" said Zan. Her voice denoted concentrated anger and annoyance.

The other girls plied Jane with questions, but she could say nothing, as Zan had not confided in her.

"Miss Miller, Mr. Hamilton himself answered the call, and I told him who I was and what we were doing down here.

"He said he was glad we were down; Daddy wrote him about our camp, and said he was to drop in now and then and see if we needed anything he could supply.

"I told him no, that we were doing fine, but that one of our girls must have lost herself—was she at his house?"

"He didn't speak at once, then he said, 'Did she have a purple parasol like your mother's last summer?'"

"'Yes, yes, that's Nita!' I cried. 'Can you bring her over—she isn't accustomed to walking very much?' And, Miss Miller, what do you think he told me?"

Zan was so angry that she almost cried as she spoke.

The Guide soothed her wisely, and said, "Go on, Zan, I am most anxious to hear the rest."

"Mr. Hamilton drove to the next town's freight station to-day to get some dog crates and he says he passed a young fellow on the road who sat in a dog-cart leaning over the side talking to a girl with a purple parasol. He says the fellow is a Military School cadet, of about sixteen, who spends his summers at his grandmother's summer place, several miles farther on from the Hamilton place. Mr. Hamilton did not wait to see what the two finally did, but he did not see either of them on his drive back from town."

Miss Miller was stunned. She stood perfectly still for a time, then said, "Zan, have you ever known Nita to show any preference for boys' company?"

"Oh, yes. And, Miss Miller, she often said to me, what a lucky girl Jane was to have a chance to see so many nice fellows! Then, when she comes to my house, she always acts so silly when Fiji is about. He gets simply disgusted with her ninny airs and foolish things she does to attract his attention!"

"Humph! I see!" murmured the Guide, but she did not explain to Zan what it was she saw.

The two rejoined the girls and supper preparations continued in silence. Miss Miller had almost decided to send out an alarm by Mr. Hamilton when she saw Nita coming up the slope.

"Oh, hello, girls! Anybody get wet?" called she, as she came near enough to be heard.

Although the three other girls knew nothing of Nita's escapade, they *felt* that she had misbehaved in some way.

"Nita, can you explain satisfactorily where you have been all this time—and not have been caught

in the rain?" asked the Guide, sternly.

"Oh, I had a nice time! Better than if I had gone mountain-climbing, I guess. I'm quite old enough to take care of myself, and, you see, I am safe and sound!" laughed she, with a hint of confusion.

"I see more than you give me credit for! You will get a pencil and pad at once and write to your mother, exactly where you went and what you did this afternoon."

"What difference will it make to mother? She isn't down here to take care of me?" replied Nita, impudently.

"Because she is your guardian by law and she must hear what you have to say," said Miss Miller.

"But she placed me in your care!" exulted Nita, triumphantly.

"Very well then, come with me and I will hear you—later I will see what is to be done," came unexpectedly from the Guide.

Nita frowned, but having trapped herself, she could not retreat by saying that Miss Miller had no right to question her.

At first the stubborn girl would not speak a word, so Miss Miller went over to her trunk and began unlocking it.

When she found that she must confess or go home, she told, little by little, about the afternoon's experience.

Finally, Miss Miller heard all she needed to know. Nita had walked along the road past Hamilton's place until a young man in a fine dog-cart came by. He mistook her for a dear friend in the city and stopped to invite her for a ride. When Nita explained that she was not the friend, he was very charming indeed, and wanted to drive her back to the camp. She demurred at first, but the shower threatened and he said she must get in and permit him to take her to his house which was nearby, until the rain was over. The house was much farther than Nita dreamed, and they just got under shelter of the wagon-shed in time. She did not go to the house, as the downpour prevented them. As soon as the shower was over they started back, but Mr. Everton lost the way and took the wrong turn. That was what delayed them so long.

"Nita, you will write and tell your mother everything you told me just now, and anything you have forgotten to say. Will you allow me to read the letter before you close it, please, as it must be plainly explained to her. If she wishes you to come home, all right; but if you remain here, it will be on a very different basis than heretofore. If you do not write, I will, and I will not interpret your act as kindly as you may do for yourself!"

Nita began crying, and begged Miss Miller not to send her home. She wanted to stay at camp. Her mother and father were dreadfully strict with her and she would have a wretched summer in the city if she went home.

"Then I should think you would take the same interest in camp as the others do—if you are sincere in wishing to remain. You have shirked every given task and made things very unpleasant for all of us, since we came to camp," said the Guide.

"Well, please, do not send me back and don't write! I'll explain everything to mother!"

"Sit down and begin. I will have to attend to supper and will look over the letter afterward."

Miss Miller returned to the fire where the girls were busy concocting some food that Hilda and Zan said they could cook. As the Guide joined them, Hilda laughed and said, "I think I'll resign in favour of some one who can bring something appetizing out of this mess!"

Nita took the pad and pencil from her folio and sat down on a stone just outside of her tent. "Just as I begin having a lovely time with Jack Everton! I wonder if that mean old snoop thinks I will let mother know about my beau! I'll write *two* letters: one she'll read and approve for me to mail, and the other I'll hide until she gives me back the first. Then I'll slip the real one in an envelope and tear up the other! Mother'll answer and say everything is all right; that she's glad I'm here, and that she don't want me to come home!"

Nita chewed the end of the pen for a few moments, planning a letter that would bring back a desirable reply from her mother. The epistle written, she began the second letter which was to be approved by Miss Miller, but the call for supper came before she had half finished writing it.

Nita went over to the group about to sit down and took her place without a word of apology for not having assisted in the preparation of the supper.

The silent prayer period was filled with grateful hearts communing with the Great Spirit, but Nita sat and looked sneeringly at one and the other of her companions. Not that Nita was irreligious, or that she scorned to pray, but she was in a mood that would have refused to obey in anything, no matter how divine.

Immediately after the meal, Nita returned to her letter and Miss Miller joined her later. When the writing was concluded the Guide read what had been written and was delighted to find that Nita had confessed fully the mistake of the afternoon. Miss Miller folded the letter and turned to address Nita more kindly.

Nita was scowling and, at the Guide's words, flounced into the tent. "Hateful spy! What right has she to send that letter?" muttered the girl.

Miss Miller stood silently pondering the sudden change in Nita. Then, having had wide experience with girls at just this critical age, she nodded her head comprehendingly, and went

inside.

"Nita, do you object to my mailing this letter now?"

Nita refused to reply, but buried her face in the pillow.

"I was wondering if you had any reason for mailing it yourself. If you have, I will leave it here."

Nita was trying to figure out whether the teacher heard her mutter or not. Then, realising that she must pretend to be penitent, she said, "I don't care, Miss Miller, one way or the other! Only, a girl doesn't like to feel that she isn't trusted to send her letter to her own mother!"

"Very well, then, I'll leave it on your trunk and you can attend to it!" replied Miss Miller, leaving it and going out.

It was the work of a minute for Nita to tear the letter into small bits and then insert the one she had first written. This done, the envelope was addressed and stamped.

Long after the girls had gone to bed and were asleep that night, Miss Miller sat by her little stand and wrote a long letter to Dr. Baker, telling him all about their camp-life and the various things the girls had already accomplished. Then she mentioned the episode of Nita's afternoon and asked what he would advise her doing in the matter. She also said that Nita had sent a letter to her mother and naturally, she (Miss Miller) would await a reply before taking further steps.

This letter was carried down to Bill's early in the morning before the girls arose, and Bill promised to place it in the mail-box with one Elena had given him for the postman.

Miss Miller heaved a deep sigh as she returned to the Bluff, for she was a conscientious Guide and felt her responsibility to the five girls. She also made all allowances for Nita, and realised that the present environment was just the right antidote for her advanced ideals of company and pleasure.

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## CHAPTER NINE

### WICKEE AND CHEOKEE JOIN THE CAMP

NITA carried her letter to her mother down to the post-box and mailed it herself. She was not eager to return to the Bluff at once, so she followed a faint path through the fields and found herself on the border of the farm-land where the stream broadened out into a sluggish shallow pond near the bridge. Here, she found great cat-tails and rushes growing, while birds and bees flew about in great numbers. She sat down on the fallen trunk of a tree and enjoyed the peaceful scene, and for the first time since her arrival at the farm, the full beauty of the place appealed to her higher self.

As is natural with any one, particularly at the age of Nita, the change from one state of consciousness to another is sudden when conditions and environment are such as to support it. Consequently, the soothing of Nature's quiet had its effect on the emotional senses of the girl. From the appealing scene of the spot and the musical zum of insects, it was but a step to the next upward thought.

"I did just as I wanted to yesterday—I had a stroll and met a rich young fellow, but why is it that this simple spot gives me more real pleasure than the ride and acquaintance yesterday?" wondered Nita, never realising that outdoor life and wholesome association was changing her likes and character, slowly but surely.

Had Miss Miller but heard the girl's admission, how relieved she would have been, but Nita kept her thoughts to herself.

During the girl's absence, the other girls indulged in gossip, as is most natural with a group at that age. Miss Miller was in her tent planning some work for the afternoon while the girls were busy making sets of rubbing-sticks after the model used by the Guide.

"Say, girls, did you ever hear of anything so nervy as Nita's going off like that?" exclaimed Jane, looking toward the Guide's tent to ascertain where Miss Miller was.

"Hum! If my mother *dreamed* of such things she would make me come right back home!" added Elena.

"I s'pose Nita thinks it is perfectly all right! You see she was brought up that way and can't gauge actions as we do," said Hilda, in apology for the absent one.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Hilda, because my Daddy asked me as a personal favour to him to bear as much as I could from Nita and do everything possible to wean her from her habits of the past by helping her to look at things as we do! I'll confess, she tries me awfully, sometimes, and I haven't much patience with her weaknesses, but I've given my word to Dad!" said Zan, flushing at the thought of her shortcomings in the ordeal.

"How do you suppose she ever met that boy?" asked Jane curiously.

"She just was brazen enough to invite acquaintance! Why, Nita'd flirt or dance with any one—as long as he had on fine clothes and was an easy mark to her glances!" scorned Elena.

Miss Miller had come from her tent unobserved and overheard the latter words. She felt

distressed at the attitude the girls took and sat down beside them.

"I heard what was just said, girls, and I feel that I must add my opinion to yours. I shall be greatly relieved to know that this is the last we will hear of the discussion over Nita's short-comings. I am not reckless enough to permit her to continue this conduct without having deeply considered every phase of the matter. I am merely giving her, as one might say, rope enough to hang herself! That is, to let her find herself and the real enjoyment of camp-life, or let her rush on until she is too far in to recover her footing with us. I have every hope now, that she is finding herself and will be one of our best Woodcrafters!"

To this the girls had nothing to add, so the Guide concluded by saying, "Please do not discuss this again, and try not to think of it either. Just leave the case to me and let me handle the situation as I am advised to do. I am not alone in this plan of regenerating the child, and it was with the sense of my obligations that I promised to do all I could."

Miss Miller went slowly back to the tent to get the papers for a Council and left the girls bending low over their work but no more was said about Nita's short-comings.

Before the Council convened, Nita came back to the Bluff and took her place in the semi-circle. After the opening song and roll-call, the Guide looked over her honour roll.

"Nita, I'm sorry but we will have to give you a demerit for absence at Council yesterday, and also defer giving you any *coup* for following a trail accurately as we did. I know you can soon catch up in this but it is more fun when we all work together," said Miss Miller.

Nita said not a word and controlled her features admirably at the mild reproach from the Guide. The marks were placed on the paper and Miss Miller looked up smilingly.

"Who can claim a reward for not chewing gum for three months?"

"I haven't chewed any since that day in school when you lectured the class, explaining what bad effects it had on the glands and throat, to say nothing of the waste of saliva!" said Zan.

"How long was that?" asked the Guide.

"Oh, that must have been more than three months ago, Miss Miller. I haven't chewed since then either!" cried Hilda.

It turned out that not one of the girls had indulged in gum-chewing since that day when they heard how the habit hurt one's health eventually. So Miss Miller was proud to give credit where it had been won.

"Now, girls, Jane and Zan have won a *coup* for fire-making with rubbing-sticks and material of one's own gathering, but no one has aspired for a grand *coup* in this line. I should think it to be a simple matter to practise until the fire could be made in one minute—try for it and see! At this meeting we will fill out and sign the claims for fire-making *coups*." Miss Miller then took a number of printed Honour Claims from her leather case and the two girls each received a *coup* claim duly witnessed, and a duplicate to paste in her Tally Book, while the original would be filed at Headquarters when the Band was registered.

"I am going to try for a degree in swimming, Miss Miller. I'd love to have the right of being called *Shingebis* as you are," said Zan, eagerly.

"Good! I like to hear that, Zan. And I don't see why Jane couldn't try, too. The other girls are learning fast and will soon be able to swim correctly and begin to practise fancy swimming."

"Shall we swim now?" asked Hilda, eagerly.

"Hardly!" laughed the Guide. "I wanted to have the others make the rubbing-stick fire and at least do a Test for the Degree of Gleeman, then take a walk over to the garden and find out how many of you can identify vegetables and fruit trees without being told."

"That will take all morning!" pouted Nita, who was becoming very expert in swimming.

"Yes, I know. Then we will have lunch and finish sewing on our suits. Later we will take our daily swim," replied Miss Miller, preparing to bring the Council to an end.

The Fire Tests were completed and the Band started across the woods toward the garden. They reached a section of the corn-field where the beautiful stalks were almost ready to tassel. Between straight rows of the green corn thick-stemmed vines crept in and out. Here and there a deep orange flower lifted its head.

"Aren't those yellow lilies a queer kind?" said Nita, stopping to examine one.

Zan laughed merrily. "They're not lilies, Ninny! They're pumpkin blossoms!"

Even Nita smiled at the wide difference between the two flowers, although the form was so similar.

"I never knew pumpkins grew like *this*!" said Elena.

"There's lots of things you girls don't know now, but you will before we leave this farm!" retorted Zan.

"I don't see what you folks need so many pumpkins for! Just look at all the vines," said Jane, waving a hand at the large expanse of field where yellow spots of colour showed.

"Oh, Mrs. Sherwood cans lots of them, and we keep lots in our cellar through the winter. Dad sends lots to Homes and the boys use dozens for Hallowe'en night. Last Fall Fiji had over a score

sent to the boys at the Y. M. C. A. for their party."

"If I had a lovely place like this, I'd just love to make others happy by giving away the things like Zan's folks do," murmured Hilda.

"Yes, and when you think of all the money we spend on visiting summer-resorts and paying high prices for travel, then compare it to cost of maintaining a farm like this one, it would about balance each year, and soon pay for the first cost of a farm," said Miss Miller.

"That's just what Dad said before we took this one. We used to pay exorbitant rents each Summer for cottages in the big mountain-resorts or at the sea-shore and only have a few weeks' good out of it. Dad only paid as much for this farm as it cost him for two Summers' outing previous to coming here. And will you believe it, Muzzer kept strict account of everything that year to satisfy herself of the truth, and we really had more first-class food produced at the farm, and for next to no cost, to say nothing of the different times we used to come down and spend week-ends all Fall and Winter, and paid off the cost besides!" said Zan.

By this time the Band reached the fence between two fields. Here was a new kind of a vine that looked like the pumpkin vine.

"Oh, and see the cute little pumpkins already forming!" exclaimed Hilda.

"That's summer squash! Anybody like squash?" said Zan.

Miss Miller had been the last member of the party, for she had stopped here and there to inspect growing things. She came up to the girls at Zan's question and replied, "Yes, I like it when it's fresh, and I know how to cook it, too."

"Then we can have some squash, pretty soon. Bill can pick it when it's ripe—he knows the right time," said Zan.

"Seems to me, Zan, that the squash vines haven't enough soil to nourish the roots during the demand made upon its strength by the ripening fruit," commented Miss Miller, examining the stem where it entered the earth.

"We'll speak to Bill about that," replied Zan, watching the Guide with interest.

Having passed through the corn-field, the Band reached the general vegetable garden. The first plants they found needing attention were the tomato vines. They had been trained on trellises but many of them had slipped and fallen with the weight of their own fruit and foliage.

"They seem to be all green leaves!" said Hilda.

"What do you call this—and this here!" exclaimed Zan, exultantly displaying a cluster of bright green tomatoes.

"They must be late tomatoes, Zan, aren't they?" asked the Guide.

"Yes, the others are down by the barn—we can pick some of them to-day if you like. Bill says there are lots of them."

"Look, girls! All the cabbages over there. Who'll ever eat them?" called Hilda.

"Bill sends all we need for winter, and lots that are left over are fed the cattle. Pigs like cabbage, and all the cows and horses eat it. Even the chickens cluck over a handful of leaves and peck for hours until nothing but the heavy vein in the centre is left," explained Zan.

"Zan, you're a real farmer! We never knew how much you understood about these things!" said Miss Miller.

"I just love the country and everything in it—that's why!" exclaimed Zan vehemently.

"Well, girls, there's plenty of work for us to do, if you want to do it. I see lettuce all ready for the table, but the weeds are thick about it so that you can hardly tell which is lettuce or which is chick-weed. We ought to clean that out!" suggested the Guide.

Without waiting for consent, Miss Miller carefully stepped between rows of growing things and reached the lettuce patch. Here she stooped and began pulling handfuls of green weeds that were just beginning to show a tiny white flower on its head.

Zan followed the Guide and also began weeding. In a few minutes, all of the girls were weeding out the chick-weed and in a short time the lettuce bed presented a very different appearance.

"My, how nice it looks! And how much better the lettuce seems to be already!" cried Jane.

Miss Miller was delighted at the interest manifested by her charges, and from the lettuce bed she led them to the radishes.

"Oh, the dear little buttons!" laughed Elena, dropping on one knee and digging up one of the red balls.

"What a small bed—doesn't any of your family like radishes?" queried Nita of Zan.

"This is only one seeding; Bill plants some seed at different times so all of the radishes won't be ready at the same time. They're not fit to eat after they are too large and pithy. These are the second planting. We have had radishes sent to the city all spring and summer, thus far."

"You are certainly to be envied, Zan—having all the fresh vegetables, eggs, butter and tender chickens you want!" exclaimed Miss Miller.

"More than we want—Daddy gives loads of farm truck to the Poor House and the Old Ladies'

Home, of which he is the visiting physician."

"I suppose the poor things are as glad to have nice things to eat as anybody else—we're all human as far as eating is concerned," commented Miss Miller.

"We may as well pull some of these radishes for lunch, Miss Miller; they will soon be too pulpy to be good," said Zan.

"All right, but you must show the girls how to pull them out of the ground—so many smaller ones grow in the same soil and the roots often twine together. By pulling out one at a time and loosening the soil first, the younger one will remain safely and continue growing until large enough to use," advised the Guide.

Hilda had found an old basket near the tomato vines and this was taken for the vegetables that might be chosen for camp.

After taking the radishes wanted, the Band moved over to the other patches of vegetables. Miss Miller saw some young, growing beets, and turned to Zan, asking if she might cut off some tops.

"What's that for—fodder for Groutch?" laughed Nita.

"No, we will have some delicious beet greens for lunch to-day, besides the lettuce and radishes."

The Guide pulled some parsley, broke off the green tops of some young celery, and then sought for a few carrots and turnips. They were still very small but she selected the largest ones. These were placed in the basket with the other things, while the girls wondered what it was for.

"I believe I see some onions down by the barns," said Miss Miller.

"Yes, they should have been planted away off at the other end of the garden, as we all dislike onions and they smell horrid while growing!" replied Zan, pursing her mouth and wrinkling her nose.

"We'll take a few onions, then. I dislike them as a vegetable to eat, but they are a very necessary item for seasoning or flavouring many foods," said Miss Miller.

"I am curious to know why you pulled such a small quantity of parsley and other green things?" asked Hilda.

"I guess you forgot that to-morrow is the day the butcher wagon stops at Sherwoods'. Bill says that he stops every Tuesday and Saturday, and we will have to provide meat enough to last for the other days, or go without it. Personally, I should not miss meat, but you girls have been accustomed to it every day, and I thought we would learn to do without it gradually. I am going to give you your first dinner without meat to-morrow, but you will have a good soup instead. That is why I pulled these vegetables—for a splendid soup."

"Sounds most appetizing just now, Miss Miller, for to tell the truth, I am starving!" said Jane.

"With all this stuff around you!" said Zan.

"But it's raw! I'd eat it quick enough if it was cooked!"

They had reached the part of the garden back of the barns and Zan ran over to the tomato vines and began turning over the thick leaves. Hanging down near the ground were many great red luscious tomatoes, and she pulled one off and took a deep bite. It looked as if it tasted good, and so the other girls followed Zan's lead. Soon, all were enjoying tomatoes the like of which they had never tasted before, as the ones city buyers get have been picked before ripe and shipped by freight. Transportation takes some days and the wholesale market uses a few days more before the grocer receives them, so they would rot if they were gathered when good and ripe.

"Um-mm! That was the best thing I've ever tasted!" said Nita, smacking her lips.

"Let's have another!" suggested Elena.

Miss Miller laughed and gave consent by helping herself to a second tomato.

"Some of these must go in that soup! And we will take a number of them for lunch and to-night," added the Guide, as the girls helped themselves.

"I see some delicious meals waiting for us this summer, as I gaze about this garden! With that rhubarb almost ready to cut, what pies and stews we can have! Then, those string beans in that patch of dwarf beans, and the peas hanging on the bushes—why, there is such an endless variety growing that we will have to turn regular cooks to be able to enjoy all that Nature has provided," exclaimed Miss Miller.

"We don't know how to cook, and you shouldn't spend so much time cooking for us," remonstrated Jane.

"I do not intend to. I'm going to show you girls how to cook your own meals. The one who won't cook gets no meal!"

What turn the conversation may have taken can never be told, for at that moment a loud sound came from the barn.

"If I didn't know that Daddy sent our old horse to a pasture for the summer, I should say that noise was a horse!" said Zan, running past the others and along the path that led to the out-houses.

The others followed quickly, and were in time to see Zan stand in astonishment. They joined her and there, in the small enclosure by the side of the barn, stood a horse looking at them. At sight

of Zan, the animal lifted his nose and neighed.

"Of all things! It's our old pet that we've had here every summer! Why, Cheokee, how *did* you get here?" cried Zan, racing over and throwing her arms about the horse's neck.

Cheokee nosed his little mistress affectionately, while the girls looked on. "I should think she'd be afraid to go so near a horse," said Elena, the timid.

"You wouldn't feel afraid of a little poodle, would you?" asked Miss Miller.

"But a little dog can't hurt you while a big horse might bite or walk all over you!" replied Elena.

"Not when he knows you, as this pet knows Zan. He is just a great big poodle—in a way; he is as tame and is as eager to please and be petted as any lap-dog!"

While they waited for Zan to rejoin them, Bill Sherwood came from the barn with a pail of water for Cheokee.

"Bill, when *did* Cheokee come here?" cried Zan.

"This mornin'. I got a wire from your pa sayin' he hed sent orders t' Hamilton t' leave th' hoss fur you-all t' use this summer. Hamilton's man came by whiles you'se was up in th' garden. Mebbe Cheokee wasn't glad t' be home!" said Bill, holding the pail for the horse to drink from.

"And maybe we're not happy to have him!" ejaculated Zan.

"That means we can take trips through the country, and at times go on a jaunt and stay all night! Would you girls like to camp out now and then?" said Miss Miller.

"Would we?" retorted Hilda.

"Just try us, and see!" added Jane, laughing.

The others also joined in the clamour for a trip and an all-night picnic, and Miss Miller laughed.

"You didn't know what you started, did you?" said Zan.

"Isn't that slang?" asked the Guide.

"Humph! Guess maybe it is—too bad," sighed Zan.

"We're all sorry to give you a mark but it will have to be done if this slang habit is ever going to be broken," said Miss Miller regretfully.

"Say, you two, why don't you do your part in deserving marks! You're a lot of quit——" Zan laughingly remonstrated and was just about to add another mark to her record, but she caught herself in time, before the last syllable was pronounced.

They all laughed and Miss Miller said, "Now, that's a good sign!"

Zan suggested that they stop at the house and get some jelly and pickles as the other jars were empty. This done, they took the path for the Bluff.

So much time had been spent at the garden, that they had just time to prepare the dinner before one o'clock. The hour for dining had been twelve, but time flew so quickly at Wickecheokee, that it seemed impossible to be ready at twelve.

During the meal, Zan told many clever things the horse had done and how trusty he was. She then gave an account of the way the boys and she had christened him Cheokee.

"He's been in our family ever since he was two years old. Daddy used him for one of his practice horses when he had to have two. Then, when he gave up going out at night, he kept Cheokee for his day use. We called him 'Bill' then. Daddy got an automobile a few years ago, and we came down for our first summer on the farm that year. Of course we wanted Billy with us. Then we found out that the farmer was called Bill so we thought he might not like it to have a horse called by the same name. And besides, we felt that a horse for a doctor and a horse in the country for fun ought to have names showing their occupations. Bill sounds all right for the city, but we wanted something fancy for him in the country. After a lot of thinking Fiji suggested Wick. That didn't fit. Then Bob said, Keeok. I didn't like that either. After starting on the name of the farm we kept on until Fiji said, Chokee. That made us all laugh and Muzzer said it was awful! It made her think of strangulation. So we modified it by calling him Cheokee, but the boys *would* use that name Chokee. We led Bill to the creek and invited the Sherwoods and some friends of Muzzer's who were visiting us, and Bob spoke a piece he had rendered at school that term, while Fiji placed a daisy wreath on the horse's head. I took a brass finger bowl and sprinkled the water on his head and we named him Cheokee. Then, we started a song but Cheokee saw Bill coming up the slope with a measure of oats and he scrambled out of the water and went for his dinner. By the time he got his nose out of the bucket and looked at us, the daisy wreath was hanging from one ear, and he had oats clinging to his nose and face. Oh, that was a funny sight!" and Zan leaned back and laughed at the memory.

The girls grinned in sympathy, and Miss Miller watched the girl who had been blessed with a father who had common sense enough to allow his girl to grow naturally, without any foolish notions, or without wasting any valuable time over her toilet.

Miss Miller thought to herself: "Zan is youngest by several months of any member of this Band, yet she has the physique and mentality of a perfectly healthy girl of fourteen. Then, too, she is so free from guile and full of intelligence, that she is an admirable associate for this or any other camp to have with it."

Miss Miller unconsciously turned her eyes on Nita, who formed such a contrast to Zan. Her very eyes expressed hidden thoughts that she dwelt upon, but would have been ashamed to admit. Her every action seemed to say, "I know I am pretty, and I shall make the most of it." Her indolence, her preference for sweet things to eat, the habit to excuse herself for any error, or misrepresent facts, all were making their lines in her face, and later would have seared her soul.

"If I can only prove equal to her!" thought Miss Miller. "I should love to replace that falsity with a genuine nature, but it must not be at the expense of my other charges!"

While the dishes were being washed, Jane said, "Could we use Cheokee for a ramble this afternoon?"

"It would be fun, Miss Miller, and he hadn't far to come this morning, you know," added Zan.

"Then say we take a short drive and let our bath go until later in the afternoon. We had planned to sew, but I will admit that no one dreamed of an addition to our camp that would open new channels of pleasure."

"Can you hitch him?" Elena asked of Zan.

"Pooh! of course! And you'll have to learn how, too."

"Oh, I'd be so 'fraid to get up close!" shivered Elena, laughingly.

"We'll take all of that fear out of you before you go back home, young lady," threatened Zan, grinning at her delicate companion.

The girls soon had the big surrey pulled out of the carriage-house and Zan led the horse out of the enclosure. Miss Miller assisted in harnessing one side while Zan did the other. The girls stood by and watched with interest.

"Who'd ever think Zan could do these things when you see her at school?" said Jane.

"Or at dancing school?" added Nita.

"Which goes to prove that a lady is always a lady no matter what tasks she does, as long as she remembers her birth-right!" ventured Miss Miller.

At the signal from Zan, the girls climbed in the surrey, with Elena, Zan, and Miss Miller on the front seat.

Cheokee knew it was to be a lark, and he started off with one of his prancing steps. The girls laughed and shouted at every thing they passed, until Zan turned the horse into a beautiful woodland road. The trees were so thick and tall that but little sunshine ever penetrated to the road. It was consequently cool and dark in the woods.

Miss Miller turned to speak to Elena and was struck at the look on Nita's face. She turned about to see what caused it, and saw a dog-cart coming from the opposite direction. She knew intuitively who was driving the high-stepping horse. There was no room to pass each other on the narrow road, and the banks rose over three feet on either side. There was only one thing to do. The young man jumped down and took his horse by the head, backing him along the road until a small spot was found where he could turn out and permit the load of girls to pass. He stared impudently at Zan as he knew she was the doctor's daughter, camping at Wickeecheokee. He raised his hat as she glanced in his direction and Miss Miller thanked him coldly for his courtesy.

Immediately after, the Guide turned abruptly to address Jane but looked keenly at Nita. The girl failed to notice the teacher, however, for she was leaning out of the surrey looking behind where the young fellow still stood waving his hat.

"Zan, stop at once! Nita's lost something! What was it, Nita—I'll help you find it?" said Miss Miller.

"Why—nothing! I didn't lose anything," replied the girl, flushing the moment she realised that she had been caught.

"Oh, I thought you were looking along the road for something you had dropped. Well, drive on, Zan, it's all right!" said the Guide.

"I might have dropped my hat and had a chance to get out and see Jack Everton," thought Nita regretfully.

The rest of the drive over the woodland road was silent, but the girls soon began chattering again, at sight of interesting things in meadows.

After leaving the woodland, Zan let the horse climb up a gradual ascent, taking his time to do so. The road doubled many times before reaching the top. This was to make the ascent easier, Miss Miller explained. At the summit the girls jumped out and admired the view. Zan unhooked the loose check-rein and let the horse graze for a time.

"We can see Baldy right across the valley—see?" said Zan, pointing in the direction of the knoll.

"Then this must be the mountain we saw yesterday," said Jane.

"It is—it used to be called Pine Tree Hill by the farmers hereabouts, but we shortened it to Pine Nob. It gets the name on account of all the fine pines covering its sides," exclaimed Zan.

"But not a berry to be seen!" remarked Hilda.

"And not a snake!" laughed Miss Miller, looking at Elena.

After the Band had roamed about all they wished to, Miss Miller, who had been carefully



examining the place, said, "Wouldn't this make a delightful spot for a night-camp when we begin star-gazing?"

"Oh, yes! And there is a small ravine where the spring of fresh water is!" added Zan eagerly.

"Is there! That was the only drawback as far as I knew—now that is removed," replied the Guide.

"Let's come as soon as we can," urged Jane.

"Very well. Suppose we say the first clear night after to-night!" suggested the Guide.

Returning, Zan chose a different road home. At the foot of Pine Nob Cheokee took the road past the Forks and went on the road that ran in front of the Hamilton place. So near were they that the barking of many dogs could be heard. Zan explained that Mr. Hamilton had thorough-bred dogs that he showed at exhibitions or sold for fabulous prices to dog-fanciers.

When the girls drove in at the farm-gate Bill was nowhere in sight, so they backed the carriage into the shed and unharnessed the horse alone.

The greater part of the afternoon had been spent in driving and there was just time for a bath, before supper had to be started.

It took but a few minutes to get out of camp clothes and slide into union suits. It had become quite the natural thing to see each other in the union suits and no further thought was given to it.

The girls were eager to try their courage again and soon were splashing and shouting, Zan suggesting ways and means of keeping afloat, or trying a stroke. Suddenly, Miss Miller stood up in the water near the willow and exclaimed, "Oh, what a cute puppy!"

The girls bobbed up quickly and looked in the direction of the Guide's glance. There sat a half-grown collie pup on the edge of the Bluff looking knowingly down at the bathers.

"Oh, you little darling! Come here!" called Zan, snapping her fingers at the pup.

The doggy wagged his tail violently and jumped up and down, giving funny little barks.

"Isn't he too cunning for anything!" said Elena.

"Come down here—here, doggy, doggy!" coaxed Jane.

The girls stood close together on the edge of the water when the pup suddenly decided to run down to them. He bounded over the grass by the pool and before any one could follow his antics, he jumped in the pool among them.

The girls gave little shrieks and the pup thought it was a signal for play. He immediately caught hold of Zan's suit where it ended about the knee. His teeth felt like tiny steel pins as he clenched the edge of the material, and Zan might have frightened him off had he not upset her into the water. This done, he paddled about and heard the girls clapping madly at the prank. He thought this meant that they wanted some fun too, so he raced to their side and jumped about in the shallow pool, making them squeal and hug each other. The puppy would not be balked of his fun, however, so he tried to get a hold on their fitted suits.

Wild screams and laughter resulted, and suddenly, while the Guide stood under the willow holding her side breathlessly, the entire group, victims and dog, rolled over into the pool.

Of course, there was a mad scene of splashing, sputtering and crying out for help, before either of the girls could rise. The puppy stood on the edge of the bank wagging his tail, his head on one side with black eyes winking at his prey, and his tongue lolling from one side of his wide-open mouth.

When the submerged four could recover a normal state of breathing again, the puppy bent down and began lapping water in as unconcerned a manner as a puppy can assume.

"I wonder if he can swim?" called Zan, who still stood at a safe distance where the dog had ducked her.

"Most likely; he ought to teach the girls the correct method," replied Miss Miller.

Zan whistled and threw a stick down stream to tempt the dog, but he merely watched it float away, and then laid down in the sun to dry.

All the coaxing and chirruping had no effect on the sleepy pup, so the girls ceased their wiles and tried to swim in good style.

During supper, the puppy cried for something to eat, and a bowl of oatmeal left from breakfast, and some warm milk was given him.

"I wonder where he could have come from?" said Elena.

Bill passed by the Bluff on his way to the barn to feed Cheokee, and he said he thought the puppy belonged to Hamilton. A light dawned in Zan's eyes at that.

"Miss Miller, I bet anything, the puppy followed us when we drove past the place. We wouldn't have noticed him, you know, and he, most likely, kept far enough behind so that we didn't see him when we got out. Collie dogs have a wonderful scent, and he could find his way after us even if we were out of sight."

"That seems plausible. Then he must go back home. We will walk over in the morning, and have Bill telephone from the house that the dog is safe."

Bill consented to do this, and the girls hurried supper and did the dishes, so that they could enjoy

a romp with the dog.

"I wish to goodness we could keep him!" sighed Zan, watching the pup drag Elena's shoe about.

"We could call him Wickee, couldn't we?" suggested Jane.

"Yes, if we owned him. But pedigreed pups like this one cost too much for our Band to buy, and Hamilton raises all his dogs for money, so it's good-night to *that* dream!" said Zan.

"Sorry, Zan, to heap trouble on your head; regret for the impossibility of owning the pup and accumulating marks against your record for slang!" hinted the Guide.

"Oh, well, I don't just care a fig! there now! If I only had a dog like this Wickee, I wouldn't say another slang-word in my whole life, really! But what's the use of caring when you haven't got a pet as cute as this one!" Zan grumbled and pouted until she was on the verge of tears. Miss Miller had a hard time to keep a straight face.

"If Mr. Hamilton could only see and hear you now, he would rather lose his dollars than disappoint you," laughed Elena.

Bill's face showed in the dark of the woods just then, and the girls halted their play to ask what was said about the pup.

"Mr. Hamilton swore at first, saying he never could keep this pup home. He was always getting lost. Then he said, "Bill, I promised the doctor a pup of the next good strain we raised here, didn't I, in return for saving the prize collie's life last year. S'posing I give that pup to the girl—if she wants him, and my debt will be paid!"

"I says t' him, Miss Zan will be much obleeged, I'm sure."

"He says, 'All right, tell her the deal is closed—the dog's hers.'"

Bill looked blinkingly at Zan and Miss Miller, and Zan gave a shout as she fell down on the grass and threw her arms about Wickee. So, that's the manner of Wickee joining the camp.

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## CHAPTER TEN

### THE LETTER THAT SAVED NITA

SOON after breakfast on Saturday morning, Bill signalled for Miss Miller's attention. She went to the edge of the Bluff and he called up through a paper megaphone (a device of the Guide's) that the butcher wagon was waiting in front of his house.

"Come and help me select the meat, girls," said Miss Miller, as she ran to the cupboard for a platter. Assuring herself that she had her pocketbook, the Guide hurried down the slope, followed by the girls laughing at the idea of six people going to select one piece of meat!

The butcher was a good-natured man eager to please a good customer. He had heard with dismay, that the doctor's family was going to spend the summer at the seashore, for the doctor always bought plenty of meat and paid cash for it, too. As many of his customers bought meat in exchange for produce, or made the man wait until they could sell farm truck before paying him, he felt a great relief when Bill told him of the party coming to camp at the farm.

"Good morning, Mr. Balsh. Have you any good shin-meat for soup?" asked Miss Miller, having been introduced by Mrs. Sherwood.

"No shin, ma'am, to-day, but I've got a good piece of flank—or a chunk of round. How will that do?" he asked anxiously.

The girls tittered at the queer terms for meat, and Miss Miller examined the flank carefully. Then, turning to the round, she asked, "How much is this a pound?"

"Twenty-two, ma'as! Same as city markets without addin' cost of haulin' or express."

"Oh, but you ought to charge extra for any cost you have to bear. Your buyers would be willing to share any extra expense," said Miss Miller.

"Yah! I knows it, but, you see, it's just this way! A new butcher starts up in town and calls upon all my customers what I have served for years. He tells them what he kin sell meat for, an' they says to me, 'Mr. Balsh, eider you gives us the same price, or we don't buy!' What should I do, ma'am?"

"That's true!" sighed Miss Miller. "Unfair competition is the ruination of all business. Most likely his quality of meat was not to be compared to yours!"

"You're a smart womans, ma'am! That's just what it tis. His meat, what he would sell my customers, what trust me for years, phew! Ma'am, excuse me, but I must tell you—it tis all bad!"

The girls had to laugh at the disgusted face on the butcher. "But I trust he didn't get any of your people from you?" added Miss Miller.

"Some few—what never paid me on time, anyways. The odders all stuck! But I tells you, I had to come down with my good meat, to his prices for bad meat!" and the poor man sighed loudly as he folded his fat arms over his rubicund form.

The round steak spread out for inspection was not what the Guide wanted. She wanted a sirloin.

"I carry a few for my fancy customers. Folks like Mrs. Sherwood's always buys round."

A fine cut was chosen, Miss Miller showing the girls why she took a steak that had very fine veinings of fat all through it. The colour was a fresh red and a goodly-sized tenderloin lay along the long narrow bone.

The sirloin was twenty-six cents a pound; the girls all stared when they heard that the steak—for one dinner—would cost almost a dollar of their camp fund.

Miss Miller selected two pounds of flank-beef and the butcher gave her a quantity of bones for nothing. The beef cost sixteen cents a pound. She pointed out the difference between top-round, flank, and shin meat, for soup. The girls had learned more in one morning about the meat they ate than they ever thought of knowing all their lives.

"If we planned to make 'beef roll' which is very nice cut cold, or with brown gravy, we would use a piece of flank. The shin meat makes the most nourishing soup, I think. I believe some folks say the flavour of flank-beef is too strong to be good, but I will leave you to judge of the quality when you taste it."

"I have a little chunk of top-round here, ma'am, that I want to get rid of. I am most through with my route for to-day an' will sell this cheap."

The butcher picked up a small piece of beef and weighed it. "It's two and a half pounds—you can have it for forty cents, ma'am."

"That is a bargain—I'll take it," said Miss Miller.

The meat was given to different girls and the wagon continued down the road, while the Band returned to the Bluff, Miss Miller carrying a large enamelled pot Mrs. Sherwood gave her as they passed the back-door.

"How did the pot happen to be down at Sherwoods'?" asked Zan wonderingly.

"Mrs. Sherwood says she generally uses it for boiling jelly to send to your mother. It is large and doesn't scorch as easily as a tin or copper kettle."

At camp the Guide placed the purse in her tent and then called Hilda to come to the fire-place with her. "You saw me build a fire the other day, so I want you to do it now. I will have to hunt for a stronger cross-stick to hold the soup-pot. When water and all this meat is in, it will be heavy for the small stick we are now using."

In a short time, Miss Miller came back to the Bluff with a satisfactory piece of wood in her hand. The girls were watching Hilda trying to light the fire without success.

After a short examination of the cause, the Guide said, "You haven't cleaned out the ashes from this morning."

"But you left your ashes in the other day," said Hilda.

"Ah, but that was when we first began our fire-pit. A small quantity of ashes always makes a better heater. But too much of anything is worse than none!"

As soon as some of the ashes had been removed and a new trial made of lighting the dry wild-wood material, it succeeded.

Elena was told to wash the bones and soup meat carefully by the willow bank, and Nita was sent to pare the vegetables the Guide placed before her. Jane and Zan were told to go to the house with the sirloin steak to keep it on the ice in the pantry.

"We must either have Bill move that ice-chest over here or we must build one for daily use," said Miss Miller, as she thought of the convenience it would be to have a larder at hand.

"What's the use carrying the meat there now? While you and the other girls are preparing the soup and things, Jan and I can hook Cheokee to the traces and use him to haul the ice-chest over here. We can tilt it over onto the wheels of the express wagon and tie it securely. When we get to Bill's, his plough horse can haul it up instead of Cheokee."

"Splendid! Zan, I almost wish I could rub out those marks for slang, and give you a merit instead, for all of your helpful ideas," said Miss Miller.

"That reminds me—we haven't held our daily Council yet. When we do, I have a proposition to make," said Zan, smiling as she ran off through the woods.

The ice-chest proved a welcome addition to the camp furniture, for most of the food could be kept inside and keep marauding ants and flies away from it.

Miss Miller placed the bones, soup-meat and the chunk of flank and top-round in the big pot, with vegetables cut in small pieces, salt and pepper, and a gallon and a half of water, thrown in last. The pot was filled to the brim until it began to boil slowly. Then, a slow fire was kept going under the pot until the soup was done—about four hours' time.

The top-round was left in for an hour, and when the Guide took it carefully out of the pot, it was half-cooked through.

"What are you going to do with it—it's only half done?" said Zan.

"We're going to have it for dinner, and save the steak for to-morrow. Now, you all watch and see how I make a juicy pot-roast of this beef."

That noon the Band had the beef, string beans, lettuce and rhubarb. A dinner fit for a prince—so

they said.

At the Council that day Zan made her proposition. "Miss Miller suggested that we each receive a demerit for slang. Now, I firmly believe that something should be given to offset those marks, so I propose that for every helpful idea given the Band, we be permitted to erase a demerit, or be given a merit to balance the final reckoning!"

The Guide's eyes twinkled at the plan, for she saw the zeal the girls were feeling in the work. She thoroughly approved Zan's suggestion, as it would prove an incentive to sharpen their wits as well as refrain from slang talking.

As the motion was carried unanimously it was entered in the Tally Book as one of the rules of the camp.

At the adjournment of the Council some one suggested that they all walk over to Hamilton's and thank the owner for presenting Wickee to them.

"Then we won't get back in time to swim!" objected Nita.

"Why not hitch up Cheokee and drive over?" said Zan.

"Better still, let me drive Cheokee over and you girls walk the required distance in the hour and win a *coup*; on the return we can drive and get back in time for a swim, too!" advised the Guide.

"Fine! That's a go!" cried Jane eagerly.

Every one approved so the hikers were soon on the way to winning another *coup* for walking. Being fresh, eager, and the road shady and hard, the walk was a delight, except to Nita, who, on account of wearing French-heeled shoes, had to give up for that time and ride the last two miles in the surrey. Miss Miller permitted Cherokee to walk slowly behind the girls and the others arrived at Hamilton's farm without realising the distance walked.

Mr. Hamilton escorted the girls over the place, showing the kennels and many valuable dogs. Then Mrs. Hamilton had them sit on the verandah while she served them with home-made ice-cream.

On the drive back to camp, Jane was learning how to guide the horse and Zan sat beside her. Miss Miller sat in the back seat so Zan had to turn to look at her as she said, "Miss Miller, I need a merit badly! I have a suggestion for the benefit of the whole camp!"

The other paid attention and Jane pulled up the reins so unexpectedly that Cheokee thought he was meant to stop, so he halted in the middle of the road. No one noticed it then.

"We have oodles of ice at the farm and we all love ice-cream, so I suggest that we send home and borrow our four-quart freezer!"

While the girls "ahed" and "ummed," Miss Miller laughed heartily. "You subtract a mark with a suggestion and add one with a slang word!" said she.

"Why, how!" frowned Zan.

"Didn't you realise it? Then it shows how unconsciously this habit has taken root. You said just now, 'oodles of ice.'"

"But that isn't slang! That's English!" remonstrated Zan.

"You'll not find it in any authorised dictionary."

"Well, I've heard the boys use that term so many times that I was sure it was English," sighed Zan.

"But, remember, most of the slang you have acquired has been the result of hearing it from your brothers. So, I would not quote them as critics of English," laughingly said the Guide.

"Well, is the suggestion approved by all?" returned Zan.

"Yes, indeed, that goes without saying!" returned the girls unanimously.

"Then we get ice-cream hereafter, but I miss my merit!" laughed Zan, turning about and chirping to Cheokee to wake up.

The swimming that afternoon was fine, as the sun had neared Pine Tree Knob before the girls were ready. Wickee had been impatiently awaiting their appearance and the moment one of them came from the tent, the collie jumped about and yelped with glee. He accompanied the Band to the pool and watched them go in, but he sat on the grass and would not be persuaded to bathe.

"He's *got* to come in—we need him to give us lessons," cried Elena, starting for the dog. But Wickee must have understood, for he sprang in before any one could approach him.

He swam about enjoying the bath thoroughly and when he had circled the pool several times, he came near Zan and wanted to play. He snapped at her hair as it floated on the water, and tagging hard, ducked her under, so that she had to catch hold of his leg to make him let go.

Then, seeing Hilda and Elena trying to swim a few yards, Wickee caught hold of a floating stick of wood and carried it to Elena. The stick caught in her hair and she, too, went under.

Wickee then tried to catch Hilda's sleeve, but she was too quick for him, and was on her feet before he could get hold of her.

After an hour of fun, Miss Miller warned the girls of the time, and went toward her tent. After a few more plunges, the girls came out; Wickee shook himself and flopped down on the warm rock

to dry.

At supper, Miss Miller said, "To-morrow is Sunday. We will observe the day in the way we have been taught. If any one feels it is not right to take a little plunge in the pool, or go for a walk, or anything we do daily, let that one follow her own conscience. I, for one, will take my usual bath, and read in the morning. After dinner, I will join any one who wishes to go for a short walk. After supper I expect to sit and enjoy the sunset and the twilight."

"We will do the same, Miss Miller," said the girls, so the question of the Sabbath was quietly decided once for all.

The girls all spent the Sabbath morning writing letters home, and to friends. Zan's letter was composed mostly of exclamations of delight over camping and requests for her mother to send various articles to the camp before she left for the beach. The ice-cream freezer was mentioned not less than four times throughout the letter, so you can see that Zan never refused a treat of ice-cream if she had an opportunity to accept any.

Monday morning the postman left several letters in the mail-box in front of Sherwoods' house. Zan saw him going down the Bridge road and called to Miss Miller, "I'll run down and see if he left any mail for us!" And was off before any one could wink.

Coming back to camp, she displayed a number of letters, among them, one for Miss Miller from her father, and another for Nita, post-marked at the adjoining post-office.

"Who do you know down around here?" queried Zan, looking at the writing.

"None of your business—give it to me!" snapped Nita, angrily, grabbing the letter from Zan's hand.

"Pooh! I should worry!" sneered Zan, also angry. "The writing looks just like Bob's did when he was ten years old! I'd find some one who could write a decent hand!"

Zan was not aware of the fact that she had touched upon a tender subject between Nita and Miss Miller, and Nita did not dare answer while the Guide stood there; but Miss Miller said to Zan, "It really is too bad that you are piling up bad marks on your page! That slang just used ought to have ten marks given you." The tone in which sentence was pronounced was worse for Zan to bear than all the marks ever thought of.

Miss Miller walked away to her tent, there to read her letter in peace, but Zan felt heartily ashamed of her anger and was willing to ask pardon. Nita, however, had gone up the path through the ravine. Be it known that she had her letter in her middy blouse, however.

In the privacy of her tent, Miss Miller opened the letter which was a reply to the one she had sent the doctor. It was as follows:

"My dear Miss Miller:

I read with deep concern the information you sent I called upon Mrs. Brampton immediately and had a long talk with her about Nita's disease—for it is a disease finding its birth in the mental realm. Mrs. Brampton cried of course, and then told me of a great deal of the worry she has had during the last two years. I have been called in now and then to prescribe for Mrs. Brampton or Nita, while Mr. Brampton has his own doctor downtown whenever he thinks he needs medical advice. Nita has not been ill in the past two years, and Mrs. Brampton has only called upon me for minor ailments, so I have not had occasion to have any serious talks with Nita's mother about the girl's well-being. I heard, with regret, that she had developed a dangerous habit of secrecy from her mother and friends. She dislikes to take part in anything that calls for physical exercise, deep thinking, or help for others. She is continually making excuses for shortcomings and has recently been misrepresenting truth to her mother as the easiest way to account for her time and actions. I think that I would have separated my girl from such companionship had I known the evil to be guarded against. As it is, I wonder if it is best for all at camp to continue having an influence such as Nita creates, about you. It will be your duty to decide; all I can do now is to assist in any way you may need my services.

"One extenuating reason for the girl's behaviour, I think we ought to take into consideration. Her mother told me of Nita's early years. The child was ushered into this world under unfavourable conditions. Mrs. Brampton is a very delicate woman and the baby had no strength with which to start the battle of life. All prepared foods disagreed with the stomach and the frail little child was merely a skeleton until after a year's time. It then became noticeable that the child was gaining slowly in health, strength and general behaviour. From the second year on, Nita grew much the same as other children, but always seemed two years behind the average normal child.

"At ten years, when I first was called to diagnose an illness of the girl's, I was surprised to find how matured she was in her ways and speech—all of which showed me that her *thoughts* were too mature for her age. Instead of a teasing, fun-loving child I found a quiet, indolent-loving young lady who constantly ate candy and read books five years in advance of her age. I told her mother than, that Nita needed tom-boy companions to interest her in physical development, and more bread and butter, with possibly a bit of jam spread on it now and then, instead of sweets, highly-seasoned salads and desserts, and the wine that Mr. Brampton always has with dinner. He has always been amused to see his little daughter sip from his glass and Mrs. Brampton told me that she could see no harm in having a child accustomed to wine, just the same as my children are accustomed to water at our table. In fact, she said that she pitied children who were never permitted to taste drinks and then went all to pieces when they grew up and went out into the world to be tempted with alcohol and tobacco.

"I found that she was not capable of discerning facts from fancy, so I did not waste more time trying to explain then; but I told my daughter to try and wean the girl from undesirable habits, and I often invited Nita to visit at our home. Perhaps, this was a mistake. It remains to be seen whether Zan has enough character and self-control to come out of contamination without a scar."

At this point of the long letter, Miss Miller looked out of the tent-opening and smiled, murmuring, "I think any child that sensible man trains can associate with and not become contaminated by evils."

Miss Miller continued reading the enlightening lines after a few moments' thought.

"Two years after my first introduction to Nita's family I was called again to examine the girl. That was when she was twelve. I found that Mrs. Brampton failed to follow my directions regarding food and sleep. She said it was such a nuisance to argue with Mr. Brampton and Nita over the wine and viands that would give a high-liver chronic indigestion, to say nothing of a delicate child! She also said that she remonstrated with Nita about sitting up late reading stories and always nibbling candy. But Nita had a will of her own! And the past year the dear child had been invited to such nice parties that she (the mother) was glad to have her meet more friends of her own or a much higher class, consequently health was sacrificed to social ambition. She explained at the time, what a graceful dancer Nita was and how people loved to have her attend evening dances and exhibit her gift for their pleasure. There was no use trying to disguise the truth which was self-evident: Mrs. Brampton was a foolish proud mother to whom flattery of anything her child did was incense at her own altar. Instead of the girl being tucked into flannelette nighties with feet so she could kick all night in bed without cold from exposure, she was flossed up in organdy and tulle ruffles with white silk stockings and shoes and shown off at dances—all for vain-glory.

"The vicious training—I mean bad, senseless, evil influence, by that word vicious—of her life had actually developed a backward delicate organism into matured girl-hood three years in advance of what is normal.

"I watched with deep interest this product of senseless motherhood for I was eager to help others by comparison with the results of my own endeavours. I often visited, without being called upon, to direct and help the girl to a better status of health and aspiration. I do not think I succeeded very well. I had the parents' foolishness to battle again. Perhaps I laid the seed of a higher life which will grow and bud during your care this summer, while her parents are out of reach. It is to be hoped for. This makes it a matter of deepest thought before she is sent back home without further trial. But at the same time others are to be considered.

"I believe the habit of taking a tiny drink of wine at dinner has resulted, during the last two years, in chronic intermittent heart-beat and accelerated circulation. This will, or has, induced inflammability of the brain which, in turn, has acted upon organs supposed to be dormant for years to come. The trashy novels Nita has been permitted to read have also caused high-tension thoughts foreign to all nature. Even an adult of experience and self-control is not benefited physically or mentally by reading or watching a play, based on immoral emotions, or the suggestions of them.

"Now the question confronts us—you and me—has the atmosphere hitherto surrounding the girl been so subtle in its evil influence that it is past coping with? Or can we, by taking deep thought of ways and means, convert this individual who is on a steep descent toward licentious living and later, chronic invalidism, to be eventually claimed by some frightful disease as payment in full for ungodly habits, into a physical success—one who desires clean living, simple loving, and pure thinking!"

With the last inspiring paragraph the letter ended, only a short phrase of "Yours earnestly," and the signature.

Miss Miller sat for a long time pondering the letter, and read several parts of it again. Then she rose with a sigh of responsibility and locked the communication in her bag.

"Where did Nita go?" asked the Guide, joining the girls.

"Up the ravine," replied Jane.

"Well, the day is clear and I think we can plan to camp out to-night. It will be our first lesson in star-gazing, too!" laughed Miss Miller, hiding her concern over Nita's absence.

"What are we going to do this morning—and this afternoon, too?" asked Zan.

"I believe we will need some vegetables from the garden, and I thought we might learn how to bake cake for dessert."

"Goody! That will be fun! Shall we divide up?" said Hilda.

"No, a short walk to the garden will be good for all; then we can all take a hand in baking the cake."

"I wonder why Nita doesn't want to take part in our fun," ventured Jane, who was being disillusioned very rapidly regarding her admiration for the graceful pretty miss.

"She has never had an opportunity to act as freely and in the open as you have, perhaps. Her home life has cooped her with its conventionalities until she feels lost in this rural life. We must be patient with her and try, by example, to show how undesirable are the frothy perishable things of social butterflies," said Miss Miller.

Nita returned before the Band was quite ready to leave camp for the garden. Her efforts to be agreeable made the girls believe that she was sorry for her ill-humor and would be pleasant thereafter. The Guide saw beneath the veneer of smiles and wondered if the letter dated from the adjoining post-office had anything to do with Nita's present good-nature.

The vegetables selected, Miss Miller said, "Our cake will have to be baked in the oven at the house. I think there will be all the ingredients necessary in the pantry. Zan can show us where the tins are kept, for I thought a jelly cake would be the best to make to-day."

"Oh, yes. I love layer cake!" cried Elena.

The rest signified their anticipation of the cake in various ways, and by the time the house was reached every one was sure the cake would be delicious.

"Oh, pooh! I'm so hot after that garden work! Let's sit under the tree and cool off," suggested Hilda.

"You didn't complain of heat while we were working in the garden," said Miss Miller.

"Just because I didn't feel it then! We were having such fun with the vegetables that I never thought of it!"

"No, isn't it queer? I never feel hot when I am playing tennis or rowing on the lake—but afterwards—my!"

"Then you lead me to believe that when your thought is filled with pleasurable pursuits, such as gardening, tennis, or rowing, the heat is never noticed—it is afterwards, when you are mentally seeking for something to divert your thoughts against, that the suggestion reaches your body, 'My, but I am warm!'"

The girls expressed their interest in individual ways, Hilda finally saying, "Miss Miller, you certainly do a heap of *thinking*! I never saw anybody who could take us up so quick on anything that could be turned into a lesson!"

"I do not wish you to feel that I am always seeking for a suitable reason to teach a lesson, but some of these opportunities you offer me are too good to lose track of," said the Guide, anxiously looking at each girl.

"Oh, don't worry! We don't mind a bit! In fact, I thoroughly enjoy your ideas—they correspond so exactly with Dad's," replied Zan, getting up from the grass where she had thrown herself.

"Where're you going, Zan?" asked Nita.

"Kitchen! I'm going to get interested and forget how warm the sun tried to fool me into believing!"

The others laughed but got up from the grass and followed Zan.

"Here's the tins, and there's the baking-powder! Maybe it isn't good—it's been here all winter!" said Zan.

Miss Miller examined the can. "It's the best powder made, and if the pantry is dry all winter and spring, there will be no loss of properties in the powder. It pays to use the best products we can get; by that I do not mean the most expensive, for often one pays more for advertised products that are really inferior than for one which is pure but not so costly in marketing the brand."

"Well, you brought eggs, milk, and butter—what else do we need for the cake?" said Nita.

"Flour—I know there is some here, for I left it the first morning we ate here," replied Miss Miller, going to the cupboard.

"And the jelly—Zan can get that," continued the Guide.

Nita was ordered to measure out a cupful of sugar, Elena to grease the jelly tins very thoroughly and spread a small piece of oiled paper on the bottom of each pan. Hilda was started beating two eggs, and Jane rubbing a lump of butter well into the sugar. Nita, having finished her measuring, was called upon to assist the Guide in building a fire in the stove.

Miss Miller reached the conclusion that by having Nita help her more she would keep her in closer personal association with her and this perhaps might benefit the girl.

"First you crumple some paper up loosely and place it in the fire-pit," said Miss Miller, showing Nita how to go about it. "Next, lay some fine kindlings this way and that—if you threw them upon the paper any way they may burn and again they may not; if you build them up so there is a liberal air-space for the smoke and fire to rise toward the chimney, the wood will always take fire readily. Now, the kindlings just right, you can lay a few heavy pieces of split wood on top. That's right, so now we'll light the paper from *underneath*! Never from the open lid on top."

The other girls left their tasks and watched the lesson in fire-building. Nita said, "Why not—I should think the easiest way would be to drop a match down to the paper while you have the stove-lid off!"

Miss Miller felt well repaid for her trouble by seeing Nita sincerely interested.

"First, the smoke rises and may cause one unpleasant choking or watering eyes. Then, too, the open lid prevents the draft that circulates from chimney down the back of the stove and underneath where ashes accumulate and up against the fire-pit to force a fire higher. If you lean over I will show you the back-damper."

Miss Miller took off the last back lid on the top of the stove and showed the girls a closed damper. By pushing in a small key just over the oven which the girls had never noticed on a stove before, she demonstrated how the little door dropped back and left the current of air and smoke to escape from the fire and rise through the chimney. She also pointed out the wide mouth at the back of the stove that permitted the air from the chimney to go down and find its way into the ash-pit directly under the fire.

"If your ash-pit is filled with ashes the fire never will force any heat into the oven, of top-lids. It may burn slowly, but not until the ashes are removed can you look for any right result in your stove! Lazy house-keepers dislike to take out ashes and keep on heaping coal on top of their fire; that only burns out the enduring qualities in your stove top. A fire that barely reached to the top of the fire-pit is always best, and to keep it at that height you must keep the ashes that are always forming under the fire well raked down until you see a red reflection at the under side of the grate. If you do not quite understand, I can show you later, when the cake is in the oven."

Nita then knelt down before the fire-pit and carefully placed a burning match under the paper. It flared up and in a few seconds, they all heard wood crackling. But smoke backed out of the lids and seemed to be ready to burst the stove-pipe.

"Oh, Miss Miller, what's wrong?" cried Zan, anxiously.

Miss Miller smiled and said, "After my lesson, can't one of you discover the trouble?"

The girls coughed and rubbed their eyes but no one had an idea what to do. Smoke kept pouring forth while they looked about for some clue to the knowledge which the Guide seemed to keep to herself. Finally, they had to give up, and she immediately took hold of a key, similar to the oven damper, that was seen in the stove-pipe, and turned it up vertically. Immediately the smoke was released into the chimney, it stopped coming from the stove.

"Well! what a simple thing to do!" exclaimed Zan.

"Now, if you run out and look up you will see smoke pouring from the kitchen chimney," said the Guide.

"We'll take your word for it—we're anxious to bake the cake," laughed Elena.

More wood was placed on the fire and a few minutes after Miss Miller poured a small quantity of coal on the wood.

"Now it will burn without our watching, and we can go back to the cake. Hilda, measure two teaspoonfuls of baking powder into two cups of sifted flour. Zan, take the spermaceti from the jelly. Wash it off carefully and leave it in the closet to use for waxing our irons when we do our laundry."

"I've often wondered what this thing was on top of the jelly and preserves," said Zan, examining the hardened cake.

"What is that put on for?" asked Elena, while the others watched Zan remove it.

"It keeps the jelly or other preserves from the air. In case of canned or preserved things, air causes fermentation. With jelly, tiny flies settle and eat the top, finally making it sour and unfit to use. This wax is poured on top of the jar while it is in a melted condition; it soon hardens and forms a close sealed top. It does not injure the quality of jelly or wax, so it is waste to throw away the wax when it is serviceable in other ways."

Zan had removed the spermaceti while the Guide spoke, and stood awaiting further orders. "Muzzer always put some flavour in our cakes—we all like vanilla," said she.

"It would be better to eat if we had any, but I forgot to have any extracts sent here," said Miss Miller.

"I'll look in the cupboard, maybe there will be some left over from last year," Zan hastened to say, and ran over to investigate. "Yes, here's half a bottle!"

The flavouring extract was added after eggs and a cup of milk had been stirred together, and, lastly, the flour with powder was mixed in. The batter resulting was just a bit thicker than a self-spreading concoction would be. Miss Miller poured it out into the three pans and the girls spread it over the bottom.

"I can judge the right heat in an oven by thrusting in my hand, but many housekeepers use a thermometer to ascertain the right temperature for baking," said Miss Miller, trying the oven as she spoke.

In a moment she added, "Bring the tins—the oven's ready!"

She opened the oven-door carefully a few times during the ten minutes the cakes were baking, while the girls hung over her shoulders and sniffed delightedly. Then the tins were taken out and the cakes removed to cool before spreading the jelly over each layer. When one layer was placed on top of the other, the cake presented a most tempting look.

"We won't bother to ice this one, as we ought to make a corn-starch pudding for dinner while the stove is hot. And remember, girls, these things all go to help win a *coup*!" reminded Miss Miller.

While the girls stirred the ingredients for the simple pudding, the Guide asked, "Do you know where starch comes from?"

They looked thoughtful for a time, then Zan said, "I think I have heard, but I never took much notice of it."



"Well, starch is found in potatoes. Of course there are many starchy products but potatoes form the principal supply. We find starch in cereals—in rice, corn and sago. As you can see, the starch we used just now is made of corn. If one uses cold water to dissolve starch, it forms a paste, while hot water forms it into globules that are used to stiffen linen and articles."

The pudding was finished and the Guide thought it a pity to waste such fine heat. So it was decided to cook the vegetables for dinner and save time at camp.

"Prepare to give me a merit!" cried Zan. "I propose that we eat dinner on the lawn for a change!" All assented, so Zan exclaimed, "Gee, that was easy!"

"Oh, Zan, Zan! You are absolutely hopeless!" sighed the Guide, while all the girls laughed.

"Now what's the matter?" wondered Zan.

"Don't you know? You win a merit one moment and deserve a demerit the next! You are so accustomed to slang that you never realise when you use it!" said Miss Miller.

"Dear me! I suppose I shall be tottering in old age before I ever can outgrow the habit!" sighed Zan.

"Not tottering, Zan, but doddering!" laughed Jane.

While the girls prepared dinner on the lawn Miss Miller was engaged in making an experiment. After dinner she invited the girls to the cool porch to see what she had done.

"Before we return to camp, I am going to show you a very interesting test in chemistry. One that will cause you to wonder how people who know the action of this poison can deliberately imbibe it and consider it worth all of their manhood, womanhood, and honour!"

On the porch the girls found that Miss Miller had visited the doctor's little office where he kept his chemicals and apparatus. A few test tubes and a glass retort stood on the table by the side of some medical bottles.

"I have here a hard-boiled egg. I am not going to eat it, but use it for the experiment that will show you what a mistake it is to put anything in the human stomach that hinders the digestion as thoroughly as alcohol does."

Miss Miller cracked the egg and crumbled a little of the hard white into each of the two test-tubes.

"The powder in this bottle of Dr. Baker's is pepsin; it is made in the stomach and digests what we eat," explained Miss Miller, as she shook the bottle to loosen the powder that clung to the glass sides.

"Now, I am going to add a pinch of pepsin to the contents in these tubes."

The pepsin was added to the egg and then the Guide filled each tube half full with water.

Taking up two other bottles, she held them up to view and said, "One of these contains an acid—hydrochloric acid, and the other holds an acid called lactic. Both help to digest our food."

As she spoke she added a few drops of each to each test-tube and shook the tubes thoroughly.

The girls had been watching everything with deep interest, and Miss Miller continued, "If we leave these tubes alone, after a time the pepsin and acids will digest the egg. Suppose, however, that I add one teaspoonful of brandy or whiskey to one of the tubes and wait to see what action takes place."

While speaking she took up a small vial of whiskey and poured a teaspoonful of it into one tube. Both tubes were then corked up.

"Now, I want you girls to take a look at the temperature of these tubes—they are the same as the temperature of a normal human stomach."

The girls obeyed and Miss Miller then placed the tubes inside a Thermos bottle to keep them at an even temperature until the time required for the digestion to take place.

Miss Miller took charge of the Thermos bottle while the girls took the remainder of the dinner back to the Bluff.

The cake had been placed inside the cupboard and soon Wickee scented it. He immediately took up his station directly in front of the doors and started howling, with an intermittent sniff at the crack in the cupboard door.

"Hey, there, Wick! Dogs' stomachs were not built for cake any more than ours were made to hold alcohol! You can't have any of that cake until we see what effect that stuff has on the egg!" called Zan.

The wise dog looked at his mistress out of the corners of his eyes, and then, creeping away from the cupboard, he quietly left the Bluff and stretched out upon the moss under the willow by the pool.

Miss Miller had gone to her tent to place the Thermos bottle in her box and was just coming out when Nita came from her tent. A pink flush over-spread her face when she saw the Guide so near, and a letter was hastily hidden in the folds of her tunic.

"I was just going down to the mail-box with a note to mother," stuttered Nita, seeing that the letter was seen.

Miss Miller made no reply but walked to the edge of the Bluff with the girl and stood there watching her hurry down the slope. At the lilac bushes that grew near Sherwoods' kitchen door, she saw Nita stop suddenly and look down at the ground. She stooped and picked up a letter—whether it was the one she carried and had dropped accidentally, or another one she had just found, the Guide could not tell.

Nita looked up at the Bluff, saw Miss Miller still watching her, and ran past the house, out of sight.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### STAR GAZING FROM PINE NOB

HALF an hour later Nita returned to camp with a face swollen and eyes red from weeping. She said nothing and the girls made no audible comment on her appearance. Miss Miller felt sorry for the girl, for it was apparent that she had experienced a heart-breaking period. But the Guide could not imagine what had caused the trouble—was it that good-for-nothing boy Everton or was Nita home-sick, or possibly, but not probably, she was ashamed of her actions during the past few days.

The girls took an early swim and then packed their kits for the night out. Each had a rubber blanket beside the camp-blanket, so these were rolled about the other items selected for the night.

At the barn, Cheokee was soon hitched up and all the duffle-bags were thrown under the seats. The girls jumped in while Zan fastened the traces and told Wickee he had to run behind, or alongside the surrey.

Pine Nob was high enough to enable one to see for twenty miles around the country, so a magnificent view could be obtained from its summit on a clear day.

"Friends, I'm about to earn another merit. Observe that I do not intend losing it immediately by using slang, so if I seem to run away suddenly after delivering my idea, it is not because of any attraction at the house but merely because I dare not remain where I may be tempted to lose my reward!" laughed Zan, as the others climbed in the surrey.

Every one smiled and waited. "Since our arrival the camera brought by Jane has remained asleep in the living-room. I go to rescue it from idleness!"

With that Zan rushed off toward the house, while Cheokee was started down the road to wait at the side-porch for his mistress. Zan earned the merit that time and Elena made a note to enter the plan of a Camera Club in the Tally Book.

The Band reached Pine Nob without mishap, but the sun was too low to take any good pictures, so it was postponed for the morning.

The fire was made, supper enjoyed and Cheokee fed and left tide to a strong tree for the night. Then Miss Miller advised all to get their beds made before darkness overtook them.

"Oh, aren't we going to sleep on the ground?" asked Hilda.

"There isn't a thing in sight that we could possibly make a bed of!" added Jane, looking about in amazement.

"Oh, yes there is! We are going to win a *coup* by making beds from wild-material only—and mighty good beds you will find them, too!" said the Guide, smiling at their doubts.

"Twigs, and leaves, and moss?" questioned Nita, ironically.

"No, hardly that, but come with me and you will see," replied the Guide.

Cheokee was tethered to a stump near the camp-site and left to enjoy his supper of oats. Miss Miller then took a trail that had not been noticeable until attention was directed to it. This, she followed into dense woods for half a mile or so, before coming to an aromatic grove. Young trees, as well as half-grown spruce, grew in a thick wall under old pines.

The Guide took her sharp sheath-knife from its case and started to cut only those branches which showed young tender green tips. "While I cut you girls can gather and make bundles of it."

"What for?" wondered Nita.

"You'll soon see, and then to-morrow you will say, 'How *can* Mrs. Sherwood sleep on feathers when these kind of beds are so cheap and convenient!'"

"Oh, I know! It's for bedding!" cried Elena.

"I bet you've read some of White's books, haven't you?" said Zan, whose brothers were in love with White's wood stories.

"Better not talk so much and work more—darkness will catch up before our beds are made," warned the Guide, cutting without a pause.

Finally, every one was laden with branches, and soon the plateau was reached and Miss Miller sought for a place where the ground was comparatively level. Here she threw the greens.

"Now watch me weave a spring bed," said she, sitting down a sort her branches, long, medium and short pieces.

She laid a row of long pieces of spruce with the tender soft green tips directly away from her. This she made about four feet wide, with the hard ends of the wood facing her. Upon this, lapping about two feet, she laid another row—then another, until the bed was about six feet long. She then placed the next layer on top but turned the ends the opposite way, managing to run the hard wood in and under the first layer. The second layer was laid of shorter branches. The third layer was laid of still shorter ones, without much hard wood to cover. What there was was run under the soft ends of the second layer so that not a bid of wood could be seen or felt. Done, she stood up and admired the bed.

"One of you girls throw yourself down—test it!"

Two or three followed the suggestion at once and each one sighed with blissful anticipation of the night's rest.

"Isn't it soft!" cried Elena.

"And springy!" added Zan.

"I love that piney odour. I always loved balsam pillows!" said Jane, sniffing at the green.

Hilda and Nita said nothing but they remained on the bed when the others got up, thus showing what they thought of it.

Miss Miller assisted the girls in making their beds and when this was done, they wanted to go to sleep.

"But we haven't seen a single star! I thought we were going to take a test in star-gazing!" reminded the Guide.

"Oh, pshaw! What time is it? Isn't it most nine o'clock?" yawned Zan.

"No, it isn't! It's only seven-thirty!" laughed Miss Miller.

"Well, girls, let's go to it!" retorted Zan, where-upon she drew upon her criminal head the laughter of the Band.

"There goes Zan's merit for camera hunting!" shouted Elena.

Zan good-naturedly accepted her doom and turned her face toward the sky to find the first star.

"Hah! there's a star!" cried she, in a short time.

"Where, where? It can't be, it's too light to see stars!" said Elena, who had hoped to be the first to succeed with the stars.

"Yes, I guess Zan is right; I see one, too, but, girls, you have to concentrate on seeking, or you'll miss the faint twinkling," came from the Guide.

After that the quiet was broken by cries, "There's one! I see another!" and so on.

Finally Miss Miller, not wishing to tire the girls the first night of star gazing, asked, "Who wants to go to bed—or who will choose to hunt some planets?"

No one was ready to retire, it seemed, for the new game was too interesting.

"For everyone who finds and names the correct planet and can tell some facts about it, we will award a merit!" suggested Miss Miller.

For some time thereafter, not a sound could be heard except the snoring of Wickee and the soft thud of Cheokee's hoofs as he wandered about the tether.

"I see Venus—right there," cried Hilda, pointing.

The girls turned in the direction pointed out and Miss Miller said, "Yes, that is Venus. Now, can you tell us anything about it?"

"Not much, I'm afraid. But I know that Venus and our earth are often called sister planets, and at Christmas time it is often called the Star of Bethlehem, as it shines so bright at that season. Then, too, I believe it is the brightest star we can see with the naked eye," said Hilda.

"Yes, that much is correct and you have won a merit, but for the benefit of the others I will add that Venus' brightness is caused by the clouds that surround it and reflect the sun's light just as looking-glass would. Our clouds also reflect sunlight. Often we will see masses of cloud banked up, so like snow-mountains and reflecting such brightness that it dazzles us to gaze at them. The thick clouds that surround Venus prevent us, on earth, from seeing any of its continents or oceans that may be there. Sometimes, when a cloud thins out we can peep through and catch a glimpse of the markings of this beautiful planet."

When the Guide concluded, the girls turned their attention to the sky again. Soon after Jane called, "I see a great big star—or rather planet. I suppose it is Jupiter, as I know Jupiter always travels near Venus."

"Yes, Jane is right, too. Now tell us all you know about him. You may gossip freely, for we all like Jupiter and are eager to hear all there is to know about him," said Miss Miller. "But I would correct your word 'travel,' for Jupiter does not travel with Venus; because it is so brilliant we see it with more clarity of vision; Venus also being so bright, we can pick these two out without difficulty. Sometimes the two planets seem quite near each other, which might lead you to think they travel in the same path."

"Well, I know this much correctly, anyway," said Jane. "Jupiter is called the Giant Planet because it is the largest of the sun's family, and is about 1300 times larger than the earth. Then, too, our earth only has one moon while Jupiter has at least eight, and I don't know how many more will be discovered in time."

Jane's manner of ending her description made the other girls laugh, but Miss Miller said, "Did you ever look through a telescope at the sky with its myriads of stars and planets?"

No one had, and the Guide said, "You've all missed a treat. When we go back to the city we will make it one of our Band's treats to visit some institution where there is a telescope. Elena, make a memorandum on your sleeve to enter that in the Tally Book."

Elena giggled, for she was not aware that any one had seen her use her cuff for a memo pad.

"Before we leave Jupiter, I think that I should add that Galileo—the man who first used a telescope, you know—sought for Jupiter one night and discovered the moons travelling around the great planet. Poor Galileo tried to prove to his fellowmen that the earth was not the only world but that it was a mere planet like many others to be seen. Folks in those days believed that the earth was the centre of all things and that the sun naturally travelled around it, as the moon and stars did, also.

"They were so furious with Galileo for trying to tell them the truth that they cast him in prison. When he showed them how the moons of Jupiter travelled around it in an orbit, just as the moon went around the earth, people began to think seriously of his statements. Some said Galileo was a magician and had bewitched his telescope, or else had bewitched his followers. After a time, however, they were forced to admit that he was right, and since then every one reveres the name of Galileo as that of a wonderful astronomer."

"I'd like to find Mars! Please don't any one else take it 'cause I was born under that planet!" said Zan, during the period of silence that followed Miss Miller's talk.

"Oh, no, Zan, you were not born under any planet! You surely have not mentioned such foolish ideas to your father, have you?" cried Miss Miller, surprised at the girl's statement.

"Why, no, I never gave it a thought, except what I heard read from a New York paper. They print horoscopes and tell about governing planets and signs of the zodiac. Is it foolish?"

"I should say it was! I know that a certain newspaper, so-called, makes a circulation-booster of a section devoted to the study called astrology, for silly folks to read and worry over. It seems all wrong to me for any one to waste a thought on such trivial things when profounder studies are right at hand awaiting our choice. It is true that according to certain laws of gravitation and natural law, the tides of the ocean are affected by the moon and planets, and farmers plant crops at certain seasons of the zodiac, but to lay claim to a star or planet having power or intelligence to control our lives and future acts, is to become a necromancer. As you can read in the first Book of the Bible, God made all things and he gave man all dominion over all created things. Man, as His child, was given power and intelligence like unto God, made in His image and likeness, and nowhere in the Bible can you read where He refuted that government and dominion! We still have power over stars and planets, and I, for one, refuse to be domineered by a light, shining millions of miles away from me. What kind of a guardian do you suppose that planet would make?"

"Then why do folks call Mars the Planet of War, and say that it is always a blood-red for a long time before a war or national strife occurs?" asked Zan.

"No one really knows that Mars is more war-like in its office than Venus or Jupiter. But I will not tell you more of Mars until Zan has found him and told us what she knows," said Miss Miller.

"I see Mars—but Zan wants the privilege," said Nita, in a whisper.

"Oh, no, Nita; if you've found him first, you have prior claim. I'll go on star-gazing and find something new!" said Zan.

"Well, it is that fiery planet just over the oak tree," directed Nita. It was correct and she was led to speak of anything she knew of Mars.

"I don't know much beside what I heard in a theatre-play called the Martians. They had a great map on the drop-curtain and I looked at the markings that were supposed to be on the planet. Then I heard once that Mars is a world like ours and has winter and summer. In winter it has vast fields of ice and in summer rivers and dark places that may be green hills and valleys. I guess it has inhabitants, too, but I don't know what scientists think about that."

"Nita is right as far as facts go, but one important item was omitted. Mars has practically no clouds, whereas the earth has an abundance of them. Therefore, it must be continually fine weather on Mars, for there cannot be any rain. Whether any people live to enjoy permanent fair weather, we do not know, because Mars is such a distance away that even with strongest telescopes we can only see different coloured markings on the surface of the planet. I sometimes think that Mars would have to have a wonderful irrigation system to succeed with vegetation if it is inhabited. As it could have no rain, it would have to conserve the melting snows of winter to water its valleys in summer."

"Hurrah! I've found my planet! You never will guess where it is located!" laughed Zan.

Several attempts were made to locate it, but to no avail.

"Yet it is the most prominent and to our eyes the largest in the sky," continued Zan,

aggravatingly.

Mercury, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus, and others were all mentioned, but Zan shook her head at each guess. Finally the Guide said, "Give up." Zan laughed with delight at having cornered the teacher.

"Ha! The moon! It is just rising above that pine!"

They all laughed, and Zan was told to tell what she knew.

"Well, I know that the moon isn't made of green cheese, although there are some folks who still believe so. Then, too——" but Zan was interrupted by the others rolling on the grass and laughing.

"Miss Miller, they should each have a demerit for disturbing the peace like this," said Zan, in mock severity.

"They'll soon cancel it then, with a merit, just as you constantly cancel your merits with *de*-merits for crime!" laughed Miss Miller.

As soon as the girls had quieted down again, Zan continued her harangue in a lecture-tone.

"The moon has mountains known to us as moon-mountains. There are many extinct volcanoes on its face that are supposed to have formed these mountains. The moon is a satellite of the earth—it follows the earth like the little lamb followed Mary. If our earth should take it into its head to shoot off to a corner of the ether, a few million miles away, the moon would just trail along after, and most likely cry all the way for its mother earth."

The girls were delighted with Zan's lecture and Miss Muller had to pull her face into control before she said, "We won't be able to tell fact from fancy, you are so ready with both kinds of information."

"Fancy will not deserve a demerit, I trust!" said Zan.

"Oh, no, but how can it win a merit? You must give us facts that will stand water at Headquarters," said Miss Miller.

"I know that the moon was once a wonderful planet like our earth is but its seas dried up and its surface broke into chaotic mountains—likely from volcanic eruptions, as its mountains present such an appearance through the telescope. It has no trees, flowers, or living creature! It may be grand to look at from this distance but it is really a great hulk of desolation, and I'm sure I'd not care to live there!"

When Zan concluded, Miss Miller asked how many knew the cause of the moon's changing so often each month, to our belief. No one ventured to reply, so the Guide tried to demonstrate to them.

"If I take a round object—here's a stone—and hold it between the moon and my eyes, the side toward me is dark while the side of the stone toward the moon is light where it reflects from the moon. Now, suppose I hold this flash-light for the sun. As I move, or turn the stone around, the side which was toward my eyes before gradually turns toward the reflection of the sun's rays upon the moon and thence to the stone. As we are stationary on the earth, while the earth revolves, we advance toward the light, then leave it again, thus seeming to see the moon grow or dwindle as the time may be."

As soon as the girls understood, the Guide was about to turn off the electricity when the ray showed Nita yawning.

"Girls, if any of you are sleepy we will go to bed. We have been enjoying ourselves so that I made no note of time," advised the Guide, looking at the others for signs of sleep.

"Oh, don't say bed yet—we want to hear some more!" cried some of the girls.

"Really, Miss Miller, I am not so sleepy and tired as my eyes—they ache dreadfully and I don't know why," said Nita.

Miss Miller knew, however, that it was the stormy weeping of the afternoon. Trying to divert the girl's thoughts would be the best soothing lotion for her eyes as well as for her heavy heart. So the Guide continued:

"Who can tell me where the Dipper is located? The big Dipper, I mean."

After much twisting of heads, one of the girls pointed it out.

"Yes; now I will give you the names of the stars that are to be seen all the year round. I will give the Latin name too, for almost all astronomers use the Latin terms but we use our common names for them.

"The all-year stars are found in the northern part of the sky, and of these the Ursa Major, or Great Bear, is the best known. The two stars pointing north in a direct line are sometimes called 'The Pointers' for they point to the Pole Star.

"The Pole Star is always in the same spot and the other stars seem to move around it. If we could leap from here to the North Pole we would find that star directly overhead.

"In spring you will see Great Bear almost over your head; in summer it will be between the Pole Star and the northwest horizon. In autumn it will be found between the Pole Star and the northern horizon, and in winter it is between the Pole Star and the eastern horizon. These positions are very necessary for you to know, for both these stars help to locate many other

constellations. The stars forming the Great Bear have been known since ancient days—in fact it is catalogued in a book of stars made over 2000 years ago, and the constellation has not moved or changed its form since that age.

"Now let us look for and find Great Bear—it is formed of seven bright stars in a group. Two pointing at the Pole Star, which will assist you in locating the constellation, and the others to the left of the first two."

After much wondering and questions, the girls were able to recognise Ursa Major, and thereafter they had no further difficulty in immediately finding it.

"The next group of stars are almost opposite the Great Bear, being on the other side of the Pole Star. It is called Cassiopeia, or Lady in the Chair. It looks like a great letter 'W' half-over on its side.

"At no great distance from each other you will see two stars placed between the Pole Star and Great Bear. These bright stars are called The Guards, as they appear to guard the Pole Star. The old legend says that Great Bear wanted to get at the Pole Star but the gods placed the Guards between the bear and his prey to prevent the Pole Star being destroyed.

"I brought a pair of field-glasses so that you can see the smaller stars. Now I want you each to take a look at them as I explain about them," said Miss Miller, taking a leather case from the ground at her side.

"The two stars I am pointing to are Mizor and Alcor—the first one is the large bright star, while the second is the small star that seems quite near to its companion. The Turks use these stars as a test of eye-sight for soldiers. If a man cannot see these stars with his naked eye he cannot enter the army.

"It has recently been discovered that these two stars are not really companions but that Alcor is far beyond Mizor, although, being in a direct line of vision with it, it appears to be quite near the bright star.

"It is only during the months of July and August that we can see distinctly the group called the Great Square of Pegasus. Why it should ever have been entitled to the name is more than present-day astronomers can tell. It surely has no resemblance to a winged horse."

"I can't see Pegasus," said Nita, at this juncture.

"Look for a bright square formed of four brilliant stars; they are on the other side of Cassiopeia, just as far from her as she is from the Pole Star—it has several stars seeming to form the handle of a pan. The handle-stars are another constellation called Andromeda, while the three stars near each other at the end of the handle are called Perseus. When you have found these stars I will tell you the legend connected with them."

One girl after another located the stars mentioned while Miss Miller directed them by pointing or description. The moment the last to locate all had done so correctly, the story was demanded.

"There once lived a king named Cepheus whose wife was Cassiopeia. They had one child, a daughter Andromeda, whose beauty was known of far and wide. Cassiopeia boasted of the unparalleled beauty of Andromeda so much that the nymphs Nereids heard of it. They became jealous and begged their father Nereid to avenge them as they alone wished the honour of being beautiful.

"Nereid thereupon sent a great flood over the land of King Cepheus and devastated everything. But the effects of the flood might have been overcome in time had not a terrible sea-monster like unto a dragon been swept up with it. This dragon went about destroying every one that came in his pathway. It had been Nereid's order to the dragon to seek for and devour Andromeda.

"Finally the king sought Ammon for advice. The oracle declared that the dragon would not go until Andromeda had been offered as a sacrifice. The king, broken-hearted, told his wife and daughter of the dreadful verdict, but Andromeda willingly gave her life for the safety of the land and people.

"She was carried to some rocks and there chained to await the coming of the monster. Instead, however, a gallant youth named Perseus passed that way and saw the princess. Her marvellous beauty enlisted his arm and sword and when the dragon came up from the green water to claim his victim, Perseus fought with and killed the beast. He then carried Andromeda back to her home and was given her as bride for his valour.

"The story of the sacrifice and valour reached the ears of the goddess Athena and she gave Perseus and his bride a place in the heavens, while the king and queen were not far off. As a reminder to mortals of the inevitable result of envy, malice, and hatred, Athena placed the dragon in the sky also, although he can never touch or harm any of Cepheus' family again."

The girls sought again the different constellations mentioned with new interest. Miss Miller waited until they had thoroughly satisfied themselves before she continued.

"You will have to use the glasses to find the three little stars called 'The Kids.' Then, too, the bright stars known as Capena extend somewhat to the left of Perseus. To the right of Perseus, but farther away, is a group of stars called Seven Sisters—they are also known by the name of The Pleiades.

"Now turn your gaze to the right of Perseus, on a line with him, and you will see a glaring star that goes by the name of Demon's Eye. This star fades and brightens alternatively, so that the

Arabs, a most superstitious race, felt the Demon's Eye approved or disapproved of their plans and wars."

Miss Miller got up from the blanket which had been spread out for the Band to sit upon, and said, "Now we must go to bed. There are many, many other interesting legends and stars to tell about but it is too late to review more to-night. In the Fall and Winter when we meet in our Councils we can take up the ones that appear in those months. Orion is one of these beautiful constellations; Canis Major and Canis Minor are two more. The bull, Taurus, which Orion fought, seems to be charging directly upon him; the two bright stars watching the conflict are called 'Giant's Eyes.' At home we will study about the Lion, the Sickle and Berenice's Hair, to say nothing of the Crown, the Ox-driver, and the Northern Cross, and I know some of you girls will get the Star Gazing coup. But now, bed for every one of us!"

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

### NITA'S ESCAPE AND REFORMATION

THE following morning the campers were awakened by Wickee, who jumped about, barking at the birds that sat on the boughs of the trees near by. Doubtless, the denizens of the forest wondered what strange creatures were reclining on the spruce beds on the plateau.

As one girl after the other sat up and rubbed her eyes, she looked about in bewilderment at first, then smiled as the novelty of the night's experience appealed to her.

"My! I slept like a log!" ventured Elena.

"I never slept so fine in my life," added Jane.

"I'll never want to sleep in a city house again, after this summer," affirmed Zan, as she rolled out on the grass.

"All I can say is that I've no kick coming about these beds. I wish we could lug them back to the Bluff to use every night," came from Hilda.

"There goes some more slang! I haven't my pad here but I won't forget it," reminded the Tally Keeper.

"Oh, bother your pad on such a wonderful morning! Better look for breakfast instead of corrections over my slang!" retorted Hilda, a trifle peeved at being caught napping in her manner of speech.

"Come, girls—we have to have water from the spring," called Miss Miller at this juncture, from the small fire-place she had built.

At that, the girls jumped up and hurried to attend to their several duties; soon after, breakfast was ready.

The top of the mountain was so delightful that the Band delayed their return to Camp until nearly noon. Meantime, Nita grew nervous and wanted to start back before the others were inclined to go. Several times she asked Miss Miller the time, and was irritable and impatient. The Guide kept close watch of her peculiar actions and waited to see the outcome.

At last Cheokee was started on the homeward road and Nita calmed down. She was very quiet but when the girls took the road that led to the house instead of the one that passed Bill Sherwood's house, Nita objected.

"Well, then let me get out here and walk to the Bluff," she said, pettishly, when Zan reminded her that Cheokee had to be put up in his shed and some vegetables gathered for dinner.

Miss Miller did not want to compel the girl to do anything she really did not want to do, so she suggested that Nita get out at the Little Bridge and stop at Mrs. Sherwood's for the meat that Miss Miller had asked the farmer's wife to buy for them.

Nita eagerly consented to this, and jumped out, running down the road that went past Sherwood's.

The girls, puzzled, watched her for a moment or two, then Zan drove on to the barn.

Nita was nowhere in sight when the girls reached the Bluff although she had had quite half an hour in which to get the meat and carry it to camp.

"She must be down at the cottage being entertained by Mrs. Sherwood. Shall I run down and see if the meat is heavy?" said Zan to the Guide.

"We'll wait a few minutes longer, then you may start and offer your assistance in carrying the packages up," replied Miss Miller, wondering if it would be wise to have Zan go after Nita. Then, realising that her concern over the girl made her magnify everything, she decided to stop worrying about it.

Shortly after this, Mrs. Sherwood came up the slope puffing rapidly at the ascent. She had a large brown paper parcel that she deposited as soon as she reached the Bluff.

"That meat don't feel heavy when you hold it at the wagon, but it grows heavier every step you take comin' up the hill," declared she, sitting down on a stone and wiping her brow with a large

handkerchief.

"Why didn't Nita carry it up—she offered to do so," asked Zan, impatient at the girl's avoidance of a task.

"That yaller-haired miss! Oh, she was too busy keepin' an eye on Jack Everton's horses to bother about the butcher. The young scape-grace had a tandem this mornin' an' the girl looked just a bit fearsome from the way she hung to the side of the seat."

"Why, Mrs. Sherwood, you don't mean——" Zan started to say, when the Guide, who was standing directly back of her, gave her a warning pinch.

"Yes, I mean that good-for-nothing! What his grandmother ever has him down here for I'm sure I don't know! She's a nice quiet sort of a lady, but that rascal! Well!" said Mrs. Sherwood, misunderstanding Zan's half-completed speech.

Their visitor turned to Miss Miller and continued, "If I had a girl to take care of I'm mighty sure I wouldn't let her go gallivantin' 'round the country with that young sport! But I s'pose you know best. Did her mother say anything in her letter about her?"

"Whose mother?" asked Miss Miller, amazed.

"Isn't that girl's name Brampton?" asked Mrs. Sherwood.

"Yes,—Anita Brampton. Why?"

"Then that letter yesterday mornin' what had Mrs. Brampton's name and address up in the left corner was her mother!" returned the visitor, with a look that said, "You can't fool me!"

"Oh, that letter Nita received was from her mother, Zan, not as you thought, from a post-office nearby!" exclaimed Miss Miller with relief.

"No, it wasn't! I read the post-mark as plain as day! And I know Mrs. Brampton's hand-writing well enough to recognise it! That writing was a school-boy's hand—most likely from this Jack!" retorted Zan.

"An' that letter was addressed to you, Miss Miller—not for the girl!" added Mrs. Sherwood.

"Why, I never got any letter, except from the doctor!"

"And I don't remember bringing one up, either, Mrs. Sherwood. Maybe you left it down in your house," added Zan.

"No, ma'am, I didn't 'cause I never took them *in* the house. When I went to the mail-box to get the mail I had Bill toot for you immejitly. And you come runnin'!"

Every one looked perplexed and Miss Miller added, "Zan, it may be possible that it was dropped when you took them from Mrs. Sherwood, or on your way up the slope. Run down and look carefully along the pathway."

"It hain't anywhere about where I gave them to Miss Zan, an' I should think some of you or me would have seen it if it had dropped along the way," explained Mrs. Sherwood.

"We've been up and down, you know, Miss Miller, and Nita has been over the ground yesterday noon, and nothing was found!"

Suddenly, the Guide remembered her suspicion of Nita and how she watched her take a letter down to post in the box. She remembered the girl's stooping and picking something up from the pathway, looking back to see if anybody saw the action.

"I think I can find it—we won't say anything more about it at present, but you're *quite* sure the letter was addressed to me, Mrs. Sherwood?" said Miss Miller, calmly.

"Sure I do! I looked over every one good, an' I says to Bill, Miss Miller's goin' to have plenty of letter writin' to do this summer if she answers all them things these mothers and fathers of the girls will be wantin' to know about their children! And Bill knows the doctor's writin' at a glance—he gets so many from him, and the other had the name, as I said afore!"

Mrs. Sherwood returned home shortly after her valuable information had been given, and the Guide continued a lesson on cookery just as if Nita were present and most obedient. But that didn't prevent the girls from thinking and wondering what would happen to Nita!

Immediately after dinner the Guide said, "Girls, I am going to the house alone, for I have an important matter to attend to; you can sew on your Woodcraft costumes during my absence."

Zan stood in deep thought for a moment after the Guide left them, then ran after her and called. Miss Miller turned about and waited for the girl to reach her.

"Miss Miller, our telephone number is 2345 Hudson Park, and Dad will be in his office from two to three."

The Guide could not control a flash of admiration at the rapidity with which Zan used her thought and common sense. She looked at her watch and remarked, "Thank you, Zan; I'll walk slowly and just about reach the house by two."

The cost of the long-distance telephone never entered the Guide's head, for it was well worth the money to have the doctor advise her in this most deplorable incident.

She was so relieved at the doctor's suggestions that she felt like singing on the way back to camp. She would have hesitated to keep Nita at camp on her own initiative but having Dr. Baker's permission to risk his girl's morals by association with the girl for the sake of winning her



over eventually, was like a tonic.

"I don't know but that Nita's very behaviour will have a salutary effect on the other girls, for they will see how despicable a thing it is, and surely they will not care to emulate Nita's manners!" said the Guide to herself.

The girls left alone to work, sewed industriously for a short time, each avoiding the subject that was uppermost in their thoughts. Finally, Jane tried to change her thoughts from the disagreeable idea of Nita's escapade and shared the secret Elena and she cherished.

"Girls, you all wondered what came in that package from the city, didn't you? Well, it was a birthday present for Miss Miller!"

"Oh, Jane! When is her birthday?" cried Hilda.

"I forgot all about it—it is the last of this month, isn't it?" asked Zan, turning to Jane.

"Huh, huh! Now try and guess what Elena and I are making," smiled Jane, exultantly.

Many were the wild guesses made but not one came near the reality. So, Elena, taking pity, told the others.

Zan looked amazed at the lovely plan and immediately turned to Hilda and said, "We can't afford to let them get the best of us—now let's try and think of something novel, too!"

Many, many ideas were suggested only to be refused by one or the other. Suddenly, Hilda noticed the bead-trimming she was sewing on her costume. It gave her an inspiration.

"Zan, let's build her a bead-loom and after it is sand-papered smooth we will decorate it with pyrography work!"

"Great! But, Hilda, who's got any pyrography tools?" asked Zan.

"I have a complete set at home, Zan—let's write a note to mother and have them expressed down at once!" cried Elena.

So the letter was written and sent down to the box before the Guide returned. From that time on there seemed to be much pleasant secrecy among the girls but Miss Miller never dreamed it concerned her birthday, though convinced it boded no ill.

When the Guide joined the circle of busy workers on the Bluff, she said, "I never saw a place where there were so many bees! I have been watching a swarm over by the buckwheat field and an idea came to me. What do you say to our using some of the money in our treasury for bee-hives?"

"Bee-hives! Mercy me, Miss Miller, what for?" laughed Jane.

"We may just as well keep bees as any one else! And just think of all the fun we will have watching and caring for them. Wickee and Cheokee were valuable additions to our Band, but I believe bees will add just as much value."

"Well, if you say so, I'm perfectly willing to get stung!" laughed Zan, making a perfectly legitimate use of slang.

"Bees won't sting if you don't annoy them! We won't tease them, and after we have some swarms in our hives the bees will get to know each one of us by sound and smell," explained the Guide.

"Why, I never knew a bee recognised any one!" cried Elena.

"Indeed they do! Some bees are so intelligent that their owners wait for them to advise about harvesting and haying," said Miss Miller.

"Now, Miss Miller! Stop stringing us!" Zan said, in a doubtful tone.

"But I'm not, Zan. I am in earnest!" replied Miss Miller, laughing at the quizzical faces about her.

"Then let's order the hives at once. Maybe we can have honey before we go back home!" exclaimed Jane.

"Hardly! But we will be well on the way there," returned the Guide, as she went to the tent for pen and paper.

The letter was written and Zan shouted for the postman to wait as she saw him driving up to Sherwoods' mail-box. She ran down with it and, just as she handed it up to the man, a tandem turned from the main-road that went over the Big Bridge and stopped at the side road that went past the farm. Nita jumped out and stood talking to the young man who drove, so Zan ran swiftly back to the Bluff, for she did not wish Nita to think any one had been spying on her.

Miss Miller was called to one side and hurriedly informed of the culprit's return. The Guide looked at her watch and found that the girl had been absent more than three hours!

She walked away from the girls pondering what would be the best step to take with the mistaken child. She hesitated to do any rash thing that might spoil all the impressions that may have caused the girl to think seriously now and then. At the same time, Miss Miller realised that the time had come for stern and definite action on her part, or create a sense of incompetency in the minds of her charges. That would never do, as she would lose any control she had held in school or at camp. She decided finally to have it out with Nita, but alone with her. She returned to the group on the Bluff just as Nita turned in from the road that went past the cottage.

"Girls, would you mind taking a tramp up the ravine? Here's my watch, Zan, do not return for half an hour, or more."

The Guide anxiously waited until they were out of sight on the trail leading to the Indian cave, then turned and waited for Nita.

"Where's everybody?" called Nita, with an air of bravado.

"On a tramp. I waited to have a talk with you, Nita."

"Well, talk doesn't hurt any one, so talk away!" said the girl, insultingly.

"Did you never hear that any one wantonly tampering with the United States mail was considered a criminal and the offence merited a State's Prison Sentence?" said Miss Miller, severely.

The air of braggadocio suddenly left Nita's eyes and her face blanched. She stood looking like a trapped thief. After a long silence, Miss Miller continued.

"I returned from the telephone a short time ago. I was speaking over a long-distance wire concerning you. I had received word previously that a letter to me from your mother was not delivered, and I believe you can explain the cause."

"Me! I didn't get the mail!" retorted Nan, trying to regain her nerve by showing a false front in speaking.

"No, but you went down over the path after Zan brought the mail here. I *saw* you stoop and pick up what evidently did not belong to you—if actions are to be considered."

Nita pondered and said nothing.

"Nita, I am not reviewing these matters for the sake of humiliating you, but I want, with all my heart, to lift you above temptation. You never had a fair start in life, but I want to prove to you that there are many, many better and far more interesting pleasures for you to enjoy than corresponding with or clandestinely meeting a young man who is not fit to associate with Woodcraft girls. If you will but trust me, you will find what a friend I can be! Even your mother says she can feel perfectly at ease knowing that you are with me!"

"Mother, pooh! What does she know about me! She never takes the time to talk with me about anything but clothes, beauty and company! It's true, she has nagged this past year about my always telling stories and making excuses, but doesn't she do the same with father? Why should I be different when I see it succeed every day in avoiding a scene about bridge games or women he doesn't want coming to his home?"

Miss Miller felt still deeper sympathy for the poor misguided girl and her voice was more loving as she said, "Where is my letter, Nita?"

"How should I know?" shrilled Nita.

"I am not your mother, Nita, and you do not have to make excuses to get out of a scene. The truth will be the only way with me to end an unpleasant interview."

Nita looked seriously at the Guide for a few moments. Evidently what she saw had a softening effect. She stood with her fingers twisting a handkerchief for a time, then said, "I buried it!"

"Can you find it readily?"

"If I want to. I know the spot well enough!"

"Then you will go for it when we are through with our talk, but I think it is time to tell you a few things that I am quite sure you never heard before. From all I hear, your mother would avoid speaking to you on this subject, but I have always maintained that it is a mother's sacred duty and privilege to advise a daughter so that she cannot possibly take a wrong step during her years of character-forming."

Nita looked about nervously as if she wished to run away, but the Guide drew her down to a log and sat with an arm over her shoulder. She began in an interesting way to tell the girl about her own maidenhood and what a wonderful mother she was blessed with. She attributed all of her present success and happiness to the warnings and advice of that fine woman. Then, she said, "I have no idea of marrying or having children of my own, so I consider it my privilege to help other girls who do not have the homes where they can seek knowledge for future guidance.

"Nita, dear, I know more than you think I do, of your need of just such knowledge, and a friend who is eager to help. You have been travelling the wrong trail all of your life, and it may be that you are now selected by the Great Spirit to show the mistakes in your home life, and introduce a new order of things."

After a long talk of past errors, her present misunderstanding of the life of a Woodcraft girl, and the bright future open to her for mere acceptance, the Guide concluded, saying, "Nita, you must not rebel at what I am now going to say."

The girl had listened with surprise at the Guide's first sentences, which showed that she was acquainted with certain conditions of the Brampton's home habits. But the poor child had never had any one explain so simply and conclusively the awful evil finally resulting from a life such as she was beginning. She saw the entire mistaken view her parents took and wondered that they could be so blinded to her well-being. She heard with trembling, of the results of indulgence in wine and promiscuous fellowship. And Nita wept and was thoroughly shaken as the kind voice continued showing pictures of what is sure to come to one who is irregardless of morals and the conscience within us given by the Great Spirit for the leading along the pathway from earth to heaven.

When Miss Miller made her final request, Nita was so plastic that she could mould her into any

future.

"Would you mind telling me how this meeting took place to-day?"

"He wrote a letter yesterday asking me to meet him again on the Big Bridge this morning. When I heard you were all going to night-camp I knew I wouldn't be back in time, so I sent a letter to say I would meet him at noon. That's why I was in such a hurry to get back to camp," sobbed Nita.

"Is he all you would choose in a friend or brother?"

"Mercy, no! Oh, Miss Miller, he is horrid, but he seems to make me do just as he says when he looks at me with a queer glint in his eyes. He has money, and when his grand-mother dies he will inherit all of her fortune, too. Mother says I must marry a rich man when I grow up—she says it will never do for me to be as poor as father is. And I don't want to be poor, either!" cried Nita.

Miss Miller gasped at the revelation of the foolish mother's advice. "Why, Nita, dear, you are only fourteen! You mustn't even think of a husband yet!"

"But every one says I *seem* much older; even this Jack Everton looked surprised when he asked me my age."

"Poor, poor child! What a joy and blessing you have missed by being so old while still so young! Now, we will remedy this loss and show you how to really enjoy youth!" Miss Miller had tears in her eyes as she spoke.

Nita looked at her for a moment, then obeyed the impulse to hug the woman who had been fearless enough to show her the light on the way.

They sat quietly holding each other for a short time, until the voices of merry girls reached them from the ravine.

"There, dear, run down and find the letter for me. When you return your face will be cool and natural again."

Nita hurried away and Miss Miller ran into her tent and threw herself beside her cot. "Oh, thank you, God! thank you, thank you! I am so happy over this one lamb found on the steep mountain-side! Safe in the fold, she will grow to love purity and truth better than evil."

The girls were bubbling with delight over their walk—the bugs, the birds, and even a snake, had been watched and admired.

"Didn't Nita come back yet?" asked Zan, after a short interval, and no sign of the girl was to be seen.

"Oh, yes, Nita and I have had a long talk and we are going to be the best of pals after this," replied Miss Miller. But her tone gave the girls to understand that not a word of the girl's escapade would ever be mentioned again.

Nita returned and took the dirty letter to the Guide's tent, leaving it on the cot.

Later in the afternoon, Miss Miller took the letter and read it with deepest pity for the girl.

"To think that she read this! No wonder the girl cried that day!"

The letter said that Mrs. Brampton had had her whole life filled with worry and disappointment over her only child's waywardness. That she intended trying a different method of training. She knew how Nita continually lied to her, and that the past year she feared that she was actually meeting young men slyly when she should be visiting friends, or at home practising music and studying school lessons.

Mrs. Brampton said she herself had so many social engagements to keep that she could not be expected to stay home to watch a wayward daughter. But she had at last decided to do something her dearest friend had suggested. Nita would be sent to a reform school—a very select and expensive place, but a reform school, all the same. Of course, she would have to meet other girls there, perhaps much worse than she, but at least Mrs. Brampton would not have to bother about her child's running about the streets.

As long as Miss Miller kept Nita on the farm, it would be all right, as far as she (the mother) was concerned, but the moment Nita was sent home, she would be packed off to a safe place.

"No wonder the poor child displays the weaknesses she does. It is our duty to train her for a better life than the one her mother can aspire to. I think I would have buried this letter, too, had I been the daughter of such a mother!"

The letter was destroyed and Nita saw the Guide throw the tiny pieces in the fire when supper was started.

That night the camp sat about the fire telling stories and recalling funny things of school-life. It was an atmosphere of unity, and Miss Miller felt for the first time since they started the Camp that she would be fully repaid by the improvement of the members, and the womanhood they would eventually reach after striving for ideals, one just a bit higher than the other, year after year, until the goal appeared.

Finally, Zan exclaimed, "Oh, we forgot the Thermos bottle with the indigestion in it!"

Every one laughed, and Miss Miller hurried to her tent to get the bottle. It was brought over to the fire and the Guide lit a candle to enable the girls to see with ease the thing she was about to show and explain to them.

The two tubes were taken from the warm water in which Miss Miller plunged a thermometer to assure the girls that the temperature was the same as the evening before.

"This is the tube in which we put a little whiskey—see the effect the alcohol has had on the egg? It is shrivelled and even harder than when it was first placed in the tube, although it has had the same advantage of digestive fluids and acids that the other tube and our stomachs have.

"Now look at this other tube in which nothing but digestive juices were left. This uniform pasty mass at the bottom of the tube is the digested egg. This ought to prove infallibly what a drink of any alcoholic liquid will do to your digestion, and after a time, to your whole physical system."

The girls stared with amazement at the result of the test on the contents of the two tubes, and then looked up at the Guide with an expression that plainly said, "No alcoholic drink for us, no matter how alluring or in what company it is presented."

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### A BIRTHDAY PARTY IN CAMP

As the days sped, the Guide felt the secrecy most evident when she came unexpectedly upon the girls. Surprised screams, and hurried hiding of bulky articles, caused her finally to realise that it was for her birthday. Hints had dropped at various times, that some gala day was approaching, so the Guide determined on her part to give the girls a great surprise also. She took Bill and Mrs. Sherwood into her confidence and the result was that everything prospered for her plan without the girls having the slightest thought of what would occur.

The day before the birthday, Mrs. Sherwood spent the whole forenoon baking and preparing a feast for more than a score of people. Bill was away at Hamilton's to see about a large carry-all that Hamilton owned but seldom used. The Guide was most concerned about having the tents all in order, and the ceremonial robes in perfect condition.

It appeared that the girls had completed their work, for they had nothing better to do than watch and offer suggestion for the Guide. Finally, she called them together and said, "Are you all quite sure of the dances?"

"Of course, didn't Nita teach us how to do the War dance, the Snake dance and the Caribou and Scalp dances for *coups* just as soon as she perfected herself in the steps, and haven't we got most beautiful wooden horns and war-clubs?" said Zan.

"Well, let us try them to-day—to-morrow I want to spend the day in another quest. Something I haven't mentioned before, but which I have given much thought to," said Miss Miller, seriously.

"To-morrow! Oh, Miss Miller, not to-morrow! That is our regular ice-cream day, and if you take us away on a hike or nature-study we won't be here to freeze the cream!" argued Zan.

Miss Miller admired Zan's clever acting but she, too, felt she must act a part or the sly girls would discover her secret. So she said, "Oh, ice-cream can be enjoyed the next day just as well as to-morrow."

The girls looked at each other smilingly, but seemed agreed upon humouring the Guide with the dances. They always enjoyed these, as they were so unusual, so now they soon entered into the sport with a zest and energy not to be found in common dancing.

Miss Miller was thoroughly satisfied with the exhibition and clapped approvingly. While the girls sat down, panting, she said, "Each one of us can take down and put up a tent in the required time; we can make fires with wild-wood materials only, we can show city folks how to make the finest bed possible, and teach some how to give first aid when needed. What with our sets of rubbing sticks made by hand, our bead-looms, butterfly nets, and Tally Books, I think we have a mighty fine showing for a month's work, don't you?"

"Not only that, but just think of all we can do now, that we never dreamed of knowing! Hitch a horse and repair the harness, make or patch garments, cook digestible meals, use a knife and hatchet in the woods, and build an article of lumber," added Zan, proudly.

"In fact, we have learned so much that it will take a review of our Tally Books to prove all that has been done," said Jane.

"Yes, girls, I am highly complimented by the progress you all have made, but I regret deeply that no one is here to enjoy our work as we do ourselves," sighed Miss Miller.

"Oh, don't worry over that, Miss Miller; toward the end of summer we will invite a crowd down and take the day in showing off. That will be a fine time to get a crowd of our schoolchums here and see how they take to Woodcrafting, eh?" said Zan, looking about at the others.

"That's so! And by the time we get home we'll have a swarm of girls buzzing about waiting to be admitted," giggled Hilda.

"I bet there's a lot of them sorry this minute that they didn't join when I invited them to!" said Zan, decidedly.

"Well, girls, I have an errand at Sherwoods' so I will run down, but I'll be back inside of an hour," confessed the Guide, as she started down the slope.

The girls smiled as soon as she had disappeared and Zan said, "Now, let's wrap them up and fix things up before she gets back."

Thereupon, the four girls ran to their tents and were noisily occupied for a time while Nita quietly took a package from under her cot and wrapped it also, using a narrow baby ribbon to tie it up.

Hilda was astonished, as she had no idea Nita had made a gift for the Guide, although she had spent many hours by herself during the past week. She had showed a desire to join in the gift-making when Zan and Jane told her of the decorated bead-loom and the butterfly tray they were making, but she gave no further sign of personal interest in their gifts. Hilda had not been able to see just what Nita made but she knew it was something that was made by hand. Believing that she wished it kept secret, Hilda whispered to Nita that she wouldn't tell!

The following morning the sun shone brightly down through the leaves of the trees, causing Wickee to blink his eyes before any of the Band were stirring. Being unduly awakened, Wickee decided it was high time for the others to be up, so he jumped upon the cots and pulled the sheets about until the girls shrieked at him to desist.

Miss Miller had, for some unknown cause, set her alarm clock and now it began ringing its warning to get up. Soon every one was out and wishing her many happy returns of the day. The breakfast was under way before any hint of unusual things occurred. Then, as the Guide hurried to the place where the cloth was spread she almost collided with Zan carrying a long mysterious parcel. Both laughed, but the Guide returned to the fire while Zan placed the gift on the grass where Miss Miller sat.

Jane and Elena added their gift, and Nita sidled over sheepishly and laid down a wrapped gift, much to the delight of the other girls. Then all ran over to assist in serving the breakfast.

Miss Miller was highly pleased and seemed greatly surprised at the unexpected gifts, but, upon opening them, she was most sincere in her exclamations of pleasure.

Not only had Jane and Elena won *coups* in finding and properly mounting beautiful butterflies and insects, but they had chosen the finest specimens and arranged them in a tray as they had planned. With the feathery grasses and a few leaves on the pure white cotton, they made a dainty gift when securely covered with glass and framed with cherry-wood having a brass handle on each end of the tray.

They finished the tray and found there was ample time to make a large picture of blue-prints of natural flowers and frame it. The delicate veining and tiny picoted edges of the leaves stood out in wonderful contrast on the dark-blue paper. This group had been framed in moulding sawed and joined and rubbed with oil by the two girls. Later, they confided to the others that they had scoured the tool-house for bits of moulding and Bill was well-nigh crazy showing them how to join the corners.

Zan and Hilda made a beautiful bead-loom—a work of art. The design burnt in on the top of the flat board was executed most artistically, and the uprights, wheels and winder, were accurately fitted to work smoothly.

Beside this, the two girls wove a braided mat similar to those in the farm-house, to the manufacture of which Mrs. Sherwood donated cut strips of rags.

But the gift that gave the keenest pleasure to the Guide, because made by Nita, proving her change of consciousness, was a Tomtom, beautifully decorated. So meritorious was it that Miss Miller exclaimed upon seeing it, "Why, Nita, I believe you can win a grand *coup* for this beautiful work!"

Nita was delighted and explained how she made it. How the frame was made of the circle of an old bentwood chair, the pieces of which were found in the barn. How Bill stopped at the saddler's in Junction and obtained a piece of raw-hide for her. How hard it had been to lace the raw-hide to the frame and the difficulty she had in decorating the Totem on the Tomtom.

True admiration was so rare a thing in Nita's experience of life that she felt embarrassed at first, but the Guide made her feel more at ease by seeking diligently for her handkerchief and not finding it. Before anything could be done to relieve the tension of the situation, the tears rolled from under Miss Miller's lids and trickled over her cheeks. At a sudden gurgle from Zan, every one burst out laughing hysterically.

"Well, I don't care if you did catch me crying like an infant!" declared Miss Miller, still laughing. "But they were tears of gladness at the demonstration of your love and sacrifice."

"That Tomtom isn't all, either, Miss Miller!" cried Nita, eagerly. "When I saw the others make two things, I said I would, too, so I wrote to the doctor for the things I couldn't get here."

"Oh, do let us see what it is! We will promise to wait patiently for you to finish it!" exclaimed the Guide, eagerly.

Only too glad to show it, Nita ran to her tent and drew a long package from under the cot. Running back with it, she displayed a target half-finished and a long paper parcel which proved to be a bow and some arrows sent down by the doctor.

"Girls, I believe Nita made and thought of the best of all our gifts!" exclaimed Elena, carefully testing the bow.

"Well, one thing is certain! We can all enjoy the target and the Tomtom will help us in dancing," added Miss Miller.

"That's what made me think of making one—I just hated to dance without music or rhythm to step by!" said Nita, happily.

A shout from Sherwoods' cottage reminded Miss Miller of some important duty she was delaying, so she hurried away after saying that she would be back in half an hour.

The moment breakfast dishes were washed the girls tried a dance while one beat the Tomtom. Then Zan suggested that they try the bow and arrows.

"Maybe we can practise and win an archery *coup* soon!" exclaimed Hilda.

"We hadn't thought of that—yes, let's try for it!" added Jane, as they hurried to select each one an arrow.

As Miss Miller returned to the Bluff her face was happy and smiling, so that Zan asked, "Well, what have you planned now to celebrate the day with?"

"What do you girls want to do?" asked she.

"Take a long ride to Junction and do some buying at the stores!" replied Nita.

"Oh, mercy me, no! Better hike over the hills and hunt for more wild flowers to finish our collection for a *coup*!" cried Elena.

"I'll tell you what, girls! Let's stay right here and work on the new bead-loom and make a few bead-bands!" said Jane, watching Miss Miller suspiciously.

The Guide appeared to be most anxious at that and said, "How foolish to waste a perfect day about camp! Let's take the morning for the woods, and spend the afternoon in camp!"

At that, Jane felt sure she had stumbled over the Guide's secret but she kept it to herself, and eagerly abetted all effort to get the girls away from the Bluff as soon as could be.

During the walk that morning they found enough wild flowers to make their fifty varieties so that each could claim a *coup*. Jane determined to keep on and find fifty more to win a grand *coup*.

On the return walk, Miss Miller found some splendid rushes and the place was marked so that it could be quickly found again when they had more time to stop and cut the rushes.

"We ought to be able to make some lovely mats and baskets from them, don't you think so?" asked Nita, eagerly.

"Yes, indeed! But we have other work for to-day, and rushes will wait better here than at camp," replied the Guide, who appeared to be very anxious to get back to camp. She frequently consulted her watch and felt impatient when one of the girls wanted to stop and examine a plant or leaf.

"You're sure you all have your Tally Books up to date?" queried Miss Miller, as they drew near the Big Bridge.

"Sure! Didn't you ask us to bring them right up to yesterday's Council!" wondered Zan.

Jane almost laughed aloud at the puzzled expression of the other girls, but she held her peace like a martyr.

Just as they passed through Sherwoods' grass-plot Zan spied the carry-all from Hamilton's, standing in the road. Two heavy horses were hitched to it, but they were tied to a post while their noses were buried in feed-bags.

"Well, I'm daffy! If I can see what that rig is doing over here!" exclaimed Zan.

Miss Miller had hurried on up the slope but Jane exploded with pent-up mirth. Zan looked at her keenly for a second, then ran after the Guide. The other three girls followed, conscious of the subdued excitement in the air.

Arrived on the Bluff, the girls were dumbfounded to find a grand feast spread out on the rocks. Mrs. Sherwood was busy by the ice-chest placing some dish inside, but the rest of the birthday feast was waiting on the cloth: four had to be used to make a large enough place. About the outer edges of the linen were more than two dozen plates and silver for each.

The girls turned to question Miss Miller and found her laughing heartily at their surprise. Before anything further could be done, Zan caught sight of some familiar form in her tent. With a shout of "Daddy! Daddy!" she rushed madly over and found herself surrounded by her entire family.

They came out laughing at the faces of the other girls. In another moment, Jane's family appeared from behind a tent. That gave the cue to others, and soon, Elena's mother and Hilda's brother came over to join the others. The doctor explained that her mother could not leave a serious case she had but sent a letter instead for Hilda to enjoy.

Every one saw the consternation Nita felt when she eagerly ran from tent to tent seeking for some one from her family, but nothing in shape of father or mother, or letter was found.

Miss Miller suddenly grasped the doctor's sleeve and whispered frantically in his ear. He quickly went over to the tent where Nita stood breathless, ready to break down at the awful suggestion that either her people were not invited or else they cared so little for her that they never bothered to write!

"Oh, Nita, dear! Come here—I forgot to give you a message from your mother! I was so delighted to see Zan, I almost overlooked you!" said Dr. Baker, smilingly, although he felt like murder in his heart.

Nita looked up with eyes full of unshed tears.

"Miss Miller's party was so unexpected and sudden that every one had the greatest difficulty in reaching each other. Now, I tried again and again to reach your folks by 'phone, but I heard your father is away on a business trip and your mother is spending a few days with friends at Newport. So, you see, Nita, how dreadfully disappointed they will be when they hear all about this party!"

As he spoke, the doctor led the girl back to the others, taking all the blame upon himself for not being able to find her parents. But he never mentioned to any one excepting the Guide, that Mrs. Brampton sneered at the suggestion of giving up a Newport trip for a visit to the farm, and left in high dudgeon when her husband declared she was no human mother!

He had to go on a business trip but the doctor said it might have been postponed if he had really wanted to do so. But Nita was comforted at the report the doctor gave, and if there lurked a semblance to untruth in his meaning, the recording angel overlooked it, for his motive was high and holy.

The great feast went off with wonderful ease, considering the scarcity of cutlery and glassware. Mrs. Sherwood acted as Chief of the Kettle, while all of the girls assisted in serving their guests from the city. Bill occupied himself rigging up the unfinished target, and attending to other things the visitors had no idea of.

When the dinner was over and everything presented a look of order again, the doctor excused himself while he went to Bill's cottage to meet the postman who could be seen driving along the road. No further thought was given to this, however, as the young hostesses were fully occupied showing their collections of flowers, insects, and Tally Books.

When every one had admired the hand-craft and woodlore the Band had learned, they were invited to sit in a wide circle while the girls entertained them with dancing and fire-making. At just this time, the doctor returned accompanied by a stranger. He brought the man directly toward Miss Miller who smiled and held out her hand in greeting.

Then it became known that the visitor was a Medicine Man, an old friend of the doctor's, who was also a member of the High Council of Guidance. He had mentioned to the doctor that he expected to visit Hamiltons' kennels that week and Dr. Baker persuaded him to make it the same day that they all intended going to the farm, thereby having him present as guest at the Woodcraft camp. He gladly acquiesced to the plan and thus he was able to see the work accomplished in a month by a Band hitherto untrained in the ways of Woodcraft lore. To say he was delighted would be to express his pleasure in too weak terms.

The girls acquitted themselves admirably in dancing while the Guide beat the new Tomtom. The Medicine Man gave them valuable hints about the true Indian Dancing, and complimented Nita on her teaching, then they made fires in required time, they did various kinds of swimming in the pool, and in every possible way entertained the visitors in a most unique and enjoyable manner. The Medicine Man took charge of affairs, and at last, when everything had been finished, he suggested that he pin the honours on their ceremonial robes. This was a treat unlooked for, as Miss Miller thought they would all have to wait until their return to the city before being awarded the honours.

The blanks for *coups* and honours, which had been sent from Headquarters, were soon filled in and witnessed, and the Band highly flattered by the speech the Medicine Man made to them before taking his departure.

Dr. Baker accompanied him to the cottage, where Bill waited to drive him back to Hamilton's place, whence he could catch a train homeward. While shaking hands with his friend, the visitor said earnestly: "Doctor, I did not see those girls before they went to camp, but they certainly are a wonderful group of Woodcrafters now, and I shall have particular pleasure in speaking of them to my associates at Headquarters. A sight like the one I enjoyed this afternoon is one of the best tonics in our work, and it encourages us to progress and expand."

"Well, if you saw some of those very girls when school closed, a month ago, you would swear some witchcraft was working for them! I never saw such improvement in girls in so short a time," declared Dr. Baker emphatically.

By the time the doctor returned to the Bluff a lively chase was ready to begin. Zan's two brothers thoroughly enjoyed the plan, and Fiji was to be Master of the game. He was expected to run away with a stuffed burlap bag that represented a deer, and hide it in some out-of-the-way spot where a deer would be apt to find refuge from a clan of hunters. He had to drop corn for the trail, so the hunters could pick up the scent and follow. These scents were supposed to cross each other or run off in a far different direction from which the deer eventually follows in order to hide itself.

The moment the doctor arrived the signal was given, and Fiji started off with the deer under his arm. As the animal had been made that morning, in a great hurry, Miss Miller used a burlap bag stuffed with straw, and painted the features on its head. Fiji's pockets were filled with corn, and he was admonished not to take it to rocky ledges or steep mountain-sides, as the hunters would not have time to stop and hunt for lost arrows in the dense undergrowth of the ravine.

After about ten minutes' start the hunters followed after the deer. The doctor felt like a boy again, taking part in the simple sport. Every one was provided with bows and arrows, and was expected to do their best in hitting the deer in the heart.

More than an hour was spent in finding the spot the deer had for a refuge. Then, Zan being the first to lead, gave the signal that the deer was found. They all trailed along the corn scent until

they met near the entrance to the cave. Here, against the opening, stood the brave burlap deer, and Zan soon had the satisfaction of chasing Fiji down the hill-side, fleeing from her arrows, which she aimed at him in punishment for doing the very thing he had been told not to do. The doctor picked up the helpless deer and laughingly carried it back to camp.

"I think Fiji is too mean for anything, Miss Miller, because we might have won another honour if he hadn't made a mess of the game!" complained Zan.

But the others laughed heartily, and averred that they enjoyed the hunt just as much as if the deer had been killed.

All too soon came the time to bid the visitors good-bye, and the girls heard with pride their parents commend Miss Miller on the wonderful improvement in them all. The great carryall was waiting at Bill's, so every one ran down the slope, the visitors climbing in, and the campers watching and advising, until Bill flourished his whip and rattled off along the road to Junction.

Gathered about the rock where Council generally was held, the girls reviewed the exciting times of the day.

"Miss Miller, that was the finest party I ever attended," laughed Jane.

"I smelled a rat when I saw that carryall by Bill's door, but I never dreamed that Miss Miller had planned it. I thought perhaps some of our folks were coming down to surprise us, and I was delighted to think it fell on your birthday," said Zan.

Then the Guide told how she first got the idea to surprise them in return for their secrets.

"Well, the doctor seems thoroughly pleased with our experiment, doesn't he?" said Hilda, remembering the wondering looks of all of the parents.

"Indeed he is! He told me, just before leaving, that the remarkable improvement in Zan and Nita far surpassed the others," said Miss Miller.

"Me! Why, I am always all right! What did he mean?" questioned Zan, astonished.

"He missed a most familiar habit, and said that the improvement was to be continued," laughed the Guide.

"Ha, ha! Zan, he meant your slang!" cried Elena.

"Oh, but I haven't quit that yet! I shall some day!" added Zan.

"You have dropped so much of it that it is remarked by those who have not heard you in a month, but to yourself it may not seem such an improvement," explained Miss Miller.

"What was it about me?" queried Nita timidly.

"He said he had never seen you in such fine health. He said that your very hair sparkled with better vitality, and your eyes were a rested blue now, where they used to be so tired. Then, too, he spoke of the improved poise in your general manners," said Miss Miller kindly, patting Nita on the shoulder.

"I'm so glad, but I really did feel badly, Miss Miller, when I found it was impossible for my family to be here with the others. I am sure mother would have been proud to see how well I am, and father would take great pleasure in seeing me do all the things I can do now," said Nita wistfully.

At that admission, the Guide thanked goodness that she had urged the doctor to make an excuse for Nita's parents, and she vowed that never a word of the truth would reach the girl from her. Time, she knew to be a kind healer, so it would not hurt as much should Mrs. Brampton ever mention it. But Miss Miller thought she understood Nita's mother well enough to know that of her own accord she would never touch upon an unpleasant subject.

The Band were so fatigued that immediately after a light supper they sought their cots, and were soon sound asleep.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### RAINY DAYS AND WOODCRAFT LORE

THE Band soon settled down into routine life again after the surprise party, the girls excelling each other in the preparation of simple meals, swimming, and other requirements of a first-rate Woodcrafter. They often referred to the Manual for ideas of how to win *coups* and honours, their ambition being to be able at the end of the summer to show a long line of decorations for their ceremonial dress.

Nita was working eagerly on an Indian Clock, or sundial for camp. Jane was making a correct map of the country about the camp. Elena was interested in collecting and mounting moths and insects for grand *coups*. Zan was becoming so expert with rod and tackle that oftentimes she returned to camp, after a few hours' absence, with a fine mess of fish. She was eager to win a *coup* for this claim, and was becoming a good sportswoman. Hilda, always inclined to household ideas, had won her *coup* for cooking, and making an Indian bed. It was her suggestion that met with great enthusiasm, and that was for all to join in building a log cabin near the camp site.





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This was considered great fun, and whenever any extra time was found the girls were always busy working on the construction of the cabin. Miss Miller had drawn working plans for them and selected and expounded the values of timber and trimming.

The weather for the first five weeks had been unusually clear and fine, but the second week in August came in cloudy, and a penetrating mist fell every other day, even if it did not rain hard enough to keep the Band indoors.

"Dear me, I wish it would rain, or do something definite, and be done with it!" exclaimed Hilda, one morning, as she shivered at the dampness of the ground.

"Seems to me I haven't seen the sun for an age!" added Jane.

"Well, I'm thankful we managed our *coups* for star-gazing and outdoor things while the weather was so good," said Zan.

"Yes, 'cause there wouldn't be much pleasure in a hunt through the marsh for bugs, or a hike over wet hills for flowers, with this fog sifting into your marrow," whimpered Nita.

"Girls, you've done nothing but complain over the weather for the past two days. It positively makes me cold, too, to listen to you. Suppose you try to change the fog into something like sunshine within," advised the Guide.

"Miss Miller, how can you, when you feel like that hard-boiled egg that refused to digest?" called Hilda, who had just eaten a hard-boiled egg for her breakfast.

"Seems to me Miss Miller believes in Fletcherizing everything in camp-life so that we, on our return home, will win the *coup* of being termed thoroughly digestible even in fog!" cried Zan, making a face at Hilda.

"One thing Headquarters can say of you, Zan, and that is that your English is Fletcherized so well these days that grammatical indigestion from excessive use of slang is a disease of the past," remarked Miss Miller.

"All the same, there's room for still more improvement," retorted Hilda, who could not win the same commendation from the Guide for careful speaking as Zan did.

"I have such faith in modern improvements, Hilda, that I would go to the trouble of tearing up and discarding old fixtures as long as I could hope for a thorough renovation. That is a delectable future you all will take pleasure in looking for," mocked the irrepressible Zan, with a sweeping courtesy.

The others laughed, and Nita, whose face and manners had changed almost miraculously since her red-letter talk with the Guide, turned to her and asked: "What are the plans for to-day?"

"Well, as the rain is making it unpleasant to remain here, and a walk is out of the question, we might go to the house and light a cheerful wood fire. With some books and a circle of happy Woodcrafters round the fire, I can't picture a better day."

"That sounds like a good time, even if it will be a dry one," declared Zan, giggling at her pun.

"Perhaps you've never heard the old saying of the something-or-other who always laughs at his own jokes," retorted Hilda.

"Perhaps you're not aware that my native wit is actually penetrating your thick——" Zan caught herself just in time.

"Huh! Afraid of a demerit! Why didn't you conclude?" dared Hilda.

"Pooh! I should worry over one little demerit when I can relieve congestion of my manners! So here's to you, Hilda, old girl. I'll put it over you, old top! Now, does my native wit penetrate your thick cocoanut?" chuckled Zan maliciously.

Although every one laughed at Zan's taking the dare in such a wholesale sweep, Miss Miller felt obliged to change the subject, while Elena quietly did her duty in noting a demerit for the culprit.

Wicke accompanied his friends to the house, and stretched out in front of the log fire the moment it was blazing in the chimney-place. The girls sat about, enjoying the cosy warmth for a few minutes before going to the small library.

"Let's bring the books out here, it is so much nicer and makes you forget that we are not in front of a genuine campfire," suggested Miss Miller.

This idea met with approval, and soon every one was squatted in a circle about the fire. Wick, be it understood, holding his prior position of comfort in front of the blaze.

"Miss Miller, did you ever take any special interest in bird life?" asked Elena, who was turning over the pages of a book on birds<sup>[B]</sup> which she had found in the doctor's bookcase.

"Yes, indeed, I love birds of all kinds, and I always try and make friends with any that come near enough. I have been thinking how nice it would be to construct some bird-houses and coax our little feathered friends to live with us in camp."

"Yes, yes, let's! We can begin to-morrow if it is clear, eh!" abetted Jane, eagerly.

"Motion carried without a protest!" said Zan.

"Miss Miller wins a merit, too. Too bad Zan hadn't thought of it, she needs merits," remarked Nita.

"I was too busy planning something of much more importance to the Band than a few little flats for newly-weds!"

"What was it—tell us before you forget," cried Jane.

"Well, just this! I am sure Miss Miller has a ton of interesting stories stored away in her memory, and this is just the kind of a day to hear some of them."

"Hurrah! Zan's right. We'll vote for Miss Miller to relieve her memory of some of the bird-tales," added Hilda.

"Maybe the bird-tales I can give you have feathers!" laughed the Guide.

"We won't object to feathers as long as they are not moulting!" came back from Zan, quick as a flash.

They all laughed at the retort and the Guide continued her argument by saying, "I never like to *give* away anything, it is too much like charity, but a fair return for anything given is a benefit for both. Suppose I tell each one a story of some bird you find in the book, you to tell me of its habits, distinguishing characteristics, and other data."

"It's a go! We all agree to refuse charity when a much pleasanter offer is made," said Elena.

"Then we will begin with the oldest Indian in the Band—Jane, you first!" said the Guide.

"Humph! I am very fond of bluebirds; suppose I select them, you'll have to wait a minute until I find something in the book about bluebirds," replied Jane, opening the book they had.

"The bluebird is one of the heralds of Spring; the male appears about a week before the female. While awaiting his mate Mr. Bluebird visits his old haunts and gossips happily with his old friends the robins. The beautiful colours of the bluebird makes him very dear to bird lovers, for he actually brings a bit of Spring sky to chilled winter hearts. It is as the poet wrote, 'with the sky-tinge on his back and the earth tinge on his breast.'

"After a few days the females arrive in loose flocks, and then is heard the love-notes of the bluebird during his wooing of a mate. When the mate of his choice and he start to think of house-keeping they find a suitable place in an orchard-tree, stump root, old post, or a modern flat as Zan says, made by some friendly hand. Most of the house-work, such as nest building, is done by Mrs. Bluebird while the master of the establishment warbles and flits about to cheer his spouse.

"Soon a few pale blue eggs are laid in the nest and in a short time tiny nestlings appear. Now both parents are out providing food for the children who eat greedily and grow rapidly. When they are strong enough to fly they leave home to seek their own fortunes and Mrs. Bluebird starts another brood."

"That was very good, Jane; now, do you think you can recognise a bluebird when you see one?" said the Guide.

"Hardly; but a concise description follows this: Bluebirds are larger than the English Sparrow, being about seven inches long. Upper parts, wings, and tail of the male are bright blue, the throat, breast, and sides are brownish; the belly whitish. The female's colour is similar but of a duller shade.

"In the summer they are found anywhere from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada, and in the winter they travel as far south as Mexico."

"Now I will tell you a true story a friend of mine told me. I was speaking of the gentleness of a bluebird when my friend remarked, 'They can fight as fiercely as others if their selection of a home is questioned.' Then he went on to mention an incident.

"A pair of bluebirds visited the gourd-shaped nest of an Eave Swallow, built the season before. Deciding after many visits that it would suit, they made their home there.

"Robins, swallows, and sparrows that came near were fought off by the male bird from his perch on the roof near the nest.

"All went well until one day, after a severe rain storm, the nest fell and the half-grown birds scattered about the steps. One was dead, the others lying quite stunned and still.

"Lining a small wooden box with soft grass and moss, we nailed it up where the mud nest had been and placed the young birds in it. The homeless parents watched us anxiously and when we left the new domicile they took up their interrupted house-keeping with a great flutter of importance."

"Wasn't that cute of them!" said Nita, smiling when the story ended.

"I guess that friend of yours must like birds!" commented Zan.

"Indeed he does—in fact, there are two friends, a man and his wife, and I wouldn't dare say which one is fonder of birds," said the Guide, her voice taking a reminiscent tone as she recalled the valued visits at their home.

"Now it is Nita's turn, being next in age," said Miss Miller, smiling in the direction of the girl who was poring over the small yellow book.

"Why, I was so interested that I forgot! Isn't it fine to find out all about such wonderful things that are about us all the time without our eyes ever seeing!" exclaimed Nita.

"Perhaps that is what is meant when the Bible speaks of 'eyes have ye and ye see not,' and in another place something about our eyes being holden so that we do not see the beauties of Spirit," said Miss Miller.

"I know that my eyes have beheld more beauty in nature since we came here than I ever dreamed was in the world," said Elena, gratefully.

"I haven't decided on a beautiful bird so much as the fact that we have heard many of them about our camp—I mean the catbird. I see a description in this book so I will read it," said Nita.

"The catbird can be found as far north as southern Canada, and in the winters south as far as Florida. It is nine inches in length, and smaller than a robin. The upper parts are slate coloured shading into black on brown and tail. Under parts are slaty grey, with warm brown patch under the tail.

"Its nest is hidden in thick bushes and is built of twigs, grasses and leaves. The five or six eggs are of a beautiful green and the parents utter their distressed call whenever a hostile bird or animal approaches its young."

"Nita's description is correct, but I must admit that I haven't any real incident of a catbird to tell you," said Miss Miller. "A few details omitted by Nita, I can supply however. He is sleek and well-groomed, being very proud of his appearance. After he is satisfied with his toilet, he will swing on an alder and pipe his low and melodious note. But how different his tone, should you approach the nest while his mate is watching a brood of young. Then they will give a spiteful and shrill call that is almost rasping on sensitive nerves.

"The catbird is a clever imitator and many a woodsman has been misled by thinking he was on the trail of a bird he much hoped to secure, or watch. Suddenly, when he nears the place where he heard the note of the rare bird, the disappointed human will hear the catbird give a mocking laugh. It also mews like a cat, so naturally that it derives its name from the habit. I may add that Woodcraft Indians should offer an honour to every catbird that overcomes the disagreeable habit of hoarse mewing. I have heard that a catbird has imitated perfectly a strain of 'Yankee Doodle' and other music. Sometimes, one will become tame and live in the home of its human friends, in this way learning to utter sounds peculiar to mortals. One catbird is said to have cried so naturally like the baby of the house that the mother never could tell which it was—baby or bird."

"I think I'll choose a wren for my bird—they are so small and busy all day long," said Hilda.

"I know a very pretty story of Jenny Wren, so you may begin to earn it just as soon as you like," replied Miss Miller.

"The wren is found in the eastern states and is about five inches long, the wings being over two inches. Its colour is reddish brown barred with dusky shades; under-parts are brownish grey. The most familiar wren is our house wren which is fond of associating with men, building its nest near

the habitations of its human friend. The nests are made of twigs and grasses and lined with any soft material the wren can find. The eggs are from five to six in number and are of a reddish shade."

"Now for Miss Miller's story!" cried Elena, eagerly.

"One summer a friend of mine was washing windows and her cloth fell on to the porch roof directly under the window. Her boy had built a bird-house of an empty starch-box with a hole cut in the end. This box was placed in a tree opposite the roof. As it had only been there a day, no one thought of tenants so soon. But the cloth was needed and she stepped down to the edge of the roof where it lay. At the same time two little wrens flew away from the top of the box where they had been watching the suspicious actions of the woman on the room.

"She threw some woollen threads and a handful of crumbs on the roof and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the wrens return and eat the bread, then carry the woollen bits into the box.

"That summer two broods were raised and sent forth into the world to cheer other people. But one little member of the second brood was so delicate that it could not leave the nest at the début of her brothers. My friend watched the nest that day, and was most eager to see what the little thing would do. That night, a prowling cat must have climbed the tree and caught both father and mother, but the child escaped—possibly by being caught in the notch of a friendly bough as it fell from the cat's claws.

"Next morning, the family were shocked to find feathers where the parents had been, and the boy, climbing the tree sadly to take down the house, heard a faint cheep! He sought and found the half-dead birdling. It was carried indoors and its broken leg placed in tiny splints. After a few days the family saw with delight, that the wren would live. It grew to be a strong bird, and as soon as practical, it was placed in a hand-made nest under the eaves of the roof directly over the window which faced the old box-nest.

"Jenny, as she was called, flew away with her friends in the Fall and the family all felt that it was farewell forever.

"The following Spring, as my friend was spading about the front flower garden, she heard a familiar cheep in the tree above her head. She looked up and saw a wren winking down at her.

"Oh, how much it looks like Jenny, but of course it can't be!" exclaimed she to the boy.

A few moments later the wren flew down and lit quite near the woman, and cheeped away as if the story must be told. The boy ran in and found his father's field-glasses. With these he examined the leg of the bird and then shouted, 'It's Jenny! It's our own Jenny with the mended leg!'

"And so it was. Jenny remembered and came back to her old home and remained to raise her family. The following year she came again, and the next year also. After that she came no more."

"Dear little Jenny—that was a sweet story, Miss Miller," said Nita.

"I want to select grouse for my wild bird—they are so pretty," said Elena, contemplating a picture of the grouse.

"That will be a good selection—now let us hear about it," replied Miss Miller.

"There are varied species of grouse, the most common, being found in northern and temperate parts of America, Europe and Asia. The largest ones found in Europe are commonly called Wood Grouse. It is a magnificent bird that grows to be from two feet nine inches to four feet in extended breadth, and weighs from eight to fourteen pounds. There are also in Europe the Black Grouse, Heath-Cock, and Black Game.

"The prairie chicken inhabits the western prairies of the United States and is the best for taste of any of the native grouse. They are much smaller than European grouse and weigh but three to five pounds.

"In New England and the Middle States the grouse is known better as the partridge, and in the south as the pheasant. They can be found where deep woods afford seclusion. They are so much sought after by hunters that the government had to pass a law to prevent them from becoming extinct. Their colouring is adapted to the colour scheme of nature and aids him in hiding from his pursuers. In early May a nest is built in a dip, or hollow, near the foot of a tree or old stump. The eggs are light buff and number twelve and more. The young grouse run about with the mother as soon as they are hatched and in a week they are able to fly about. A brood remains intact until hunters, dogs, or wild animals break up the family."

Elena gave a signal for the Guide's story.

"The only one I can think of this moment is one told me by the same friend who related so many bird-tales to me.

"He thought it might be possible to capture some young grouse and raise them in captivity and tame them. So, one day, while walking through an ancient wood road thickly covered with beech leaves, he found a mother with her brood of little chicks not more than a few days old.

"He endeavored to catch some and advanced toward the little fellows. As he did so, the mother uttered a hissing sound very disagreeable to the ear, and flew at him with wings spread and head low. As he did not stir she charged almost to his feet, then turned and struggled off, painfully dragging a wing as though it had been broken.

"He was so interested in watching the mother that he forgot momentarily about the chicks. He followed the poor mother for a short distance, gaining on her at every stride until he was near enough to pick her up carefully.

"Whoop—whirrr! away she flew with no indication of an injury to either wing. When he sought for the chicks not one could be seen.

"Refusing to have a grouse fool him in that simple manner, he hid among the leaves of a thicket and waited patiently.

"After a time a whirr of wings flew by the thicket and soon the mother called *Kwit, kwit!* Then, out of the leaves came the little fellows, and hopped about their mother. They had been hidden under leaves nearby and so quiet had they kept that not a sound or peep of any of them betrayed the hiding place."

"Did he catch them?" eagerly asked Elena.

"No, indeed, he smiled at the solicitude of the mother and the rare obedience of the children who had been taught what they must do in times of danger, so that he walked back home empty-handed."

"I s'pose wild animals eat lots of them?" ventured Hilda.

"Yes, the grouse is hunted both by man and beast. But the grouse knows by instinct just what to do, so they sit up in the branches of a tree during the night hours when four-footed hunters seek to catch them. Then, they find a new peril awaiting them if an owl happens to be near. Owls love to feast on a nice plump grouse.

"Beside the owl, the grouse is exposed to the cold of winter when he has to flee to the branch of a tree; if snow covers the ground sufficiently to blanket him he dives head first from his perch into the soft hiding place and it closes over him, keeping him warm and giving protection at the same time."

"Humph! I could yearn for the millennium-time when the lion and lamb shall walk together, for then the grouse will be quite safe, won't he?" said Zan, almost in tears over the troubles of the little brown bird.

"Yes, that will be a wonderful time, Zan, and we shall all be at peace there," replied Miss Miller, looking away out of the open door.

"Now see what you started, Zan Baker!" whispered Elena, who was impatient to continue the bird stories.

Miss Miller laughed and Zan retorted, "A demerit for Elena—using slang!"

"I've chosen the hawk—not because it is beautiful or lovable but because I do not know much about them," said Zan.

"Well, you have covered three distinct types in one selection, for the owl, the eagle and the hawk have much the same habits. Now read your lesson," said the Guide.

"The hawk family has several branches, the most common and the fiercest is called the sparrow hawk. In olden times the nobles at Court liked to go hawking—that is they trained hawks to hunt for them. Too, falcons were used for the same purpose.

"A hawk has a beak much like a falcon, but its wings are shorter and lacks the pointed tip. It is found in cold countries and in the hills and mountains of northern climates.

"Among the hundreds of varieties in the world, there are over thirty distinct kinds in America. Among the commoner known are the pigeon hawk, the chicken hawk, the sparrow hawk, and marsh hawk."

Zan stopped short and studied the book for a moment, then said, "It doesn't say anything about nests or the young hawks."

"Well, then I will speak a good word for the hawk for he needs it. Farmers used to think he was an enemy to be watched and shot on sight. Recent years, however, have shown that the hawk will not steal a chicken or pigeon, if there are enough mice or rodents about. Even destructive insects will furnish a lunch for him, if he can find enough. As they destroy the very things a farmer dreads for his crops, they really become a ready-aid to house-cleaning the fields.

"From the reading Zan gave us you might be led to think that hawks only inhabited cold countries, but that is not so. They are well distributed over North America and migrate south with other feathered tribes. Some remain permanently in the south. The name sparrow hawk does not signify that he kills our little sparrow, for he does not. He lives mainly on insects. The hawk's nest is generally found in an old tree hollow and the eggs number four to five—brown spotted in colour and thick shelled.

"Mr. Thompson-Seton says of the marsh hawk, 'that they eat mice, reptiles, frogs, and birds, but rarely attack fowls,' and Mr. Seton is an authority not to be disputed.

"Well, we've had our five birds but the manual says we must have about ten. Miss Miller, it will be much nicer if you tell us about the others and let us hear and think, then apply our lessons later," suggested Zan.

The other girls heartily approved of the suggestion, so the Guide looked at her watch and smilingly said, "It is almost time for lunch, and we haven't been near the kitchen yet."

"Well, lunch can wait to-day—we have all afternoon anyway!" replied Jane looking out at the pouring rain.

"I think I'll speak of the birds we are apt to find in our woods at home. Then, should you see one you can better apply your knowledge," said the Guide.

"The swallow is one of our most graceful birds. There are the common barn swallow, the eave swallow, tree swallow and bank swallow.

"The barn swallow is our greatest neighbour; he is about seven inches long with a body of steel-blue on the upper parts, head, throat and breast a warm chestnut colour. The outer tail feathers are sharply forked in shape and are tipped with white. The wing feathers when spread wide also show a dot of white now and then. They travel as far north as Greenland in summer and go to South America in winter.

"The eave swallow builds its gourd-shaped nest under the eaves of the barn, as you doubtless understood from his name. The nests are built of clay or mud, and often, when the young birds are newly hatched the weight causes the nest to break away from the eaves and general destruction results. The brave little swallow begins anew, however, and soon another home and family are his reward. The nests are lined with soft feathers and grass and have a small round entrance from which the lady of the house peeps forth at her neighbours.

"Eave swallows resemble their cousins the barn swallows in shape and color, but they are not as graceful and lack the forked tail. They are slightly shorter too, and have a brown ring around the neck.

"Bank swallows are always flitting about in daytime and you can often see them resting on the telegraph wires. He should be called the engineer swallow, as he is a digger of tunnels. He cuts into a bank with his feet until he has tunnelled for a yard or so. In a small nook at the end he makes the nest.

"These swallows are but five inches long and feed on insects as do all swallows. They are found in North America and migrate as far south as Brazil in winter.

"A bird sometimes called chimney swallow is also known by the name of chimney swift. It nests in the chimneys now, but in days when few white folks lived in America it lived in hollow trees or caves."

The girls sat with eyes intent on the Guide as she paused and Jane said, "Fine, Miss Miller, but you still have four more stories."

"I ought to be allowed time to breathe and take a sip of water like any public speaker does," said Miss Miller, rising to go to the porch where stood a bucket of fresh water from the well.

"We'll have a drink too, it is more convivial when all join in," laughed Nita.

"Since it is Nature's special brew I heartily endorse your suggestion," replied Miss Miller, in thought reading again the contents of Doctor Baker's letter.

Comfortably grouped once more near the fire, the Guide continued.

"A bird we are sure to hear while in camp is the whippoorwill. When you first hear his cry you will feel startled, wondering who is about to be whipped. Then, as the cry is repeated over and over from the willows, or some other tree, you will remember my story.

"This bird flies in the night and rests in the daytime. They build no nests but lay two eggs on a stump, or on the ground. It is a reddish-brown in colour, mottled with grey-black and white.

"They eat great quantities of destructive insects and thus prove a help to mankind.

"Many superstitious folk used to believe that a whippoorwill boded ill to the family it serenaded, but this foolishness is fast disappearing as the understanding of bird-life and denizens of the forest becomes wide-spread. And, girls, camps and organisations like Woodcraft are actually bringing about the boon of knowledge to deluded and ignorant mortals."

"Long live Woodcraft!" came from Zan in a deep-toned boom.

The others laughed and Miss Miller assumed a more comfortable position before she continued.

"There are so many sweet little birds that I am sure we have seen this summer that I hardly know where to begin. I want to speak of the oriole, the bobolink, the friendly sparrow, the lark, and, in fact, I can't repeat more just now. But one bird I must acquaint you with is the wood-pecker.

"In the spring you will see the red-headed wood-pecker. They used to be very tame and trusting, but they have thinned out considerably of recent years. The head, neck and throat are bright crimson, their backs black, and under parts white. The wings and tails are bluish black, and the wings in flight are plainly barred with white.

"He builds a nest in a hollow tree and feeds upon nuts which he stores in hollow fence posts and trees, as well as on insects and slugs. A favourite delicacy is the fresh sap of a tree. So eager is he to get the latter that he will drill a hole in a perfectly healthy orchard tree and drink the fluid that forms in the little cups drilled by the marauder. In this way, a fine fruit-bearing tree will soon show signs of the ravages of the sap-sucker.

"Our cheeriest bird-friend, I think, is the robin, for he announces that spring is surely come to stay.

"I am not going into details about robin, for you know as much as I do about him, but he ought to

be included in our ten, I think," said Miss Miller.

"Oh, yes, he was a favourite with the Indians, too," added Zan.

"A queer bird I want to tell you about is the loon. You will not find him about this section of the country, but some day when we camp farther north in the mountains, we will recognise him readily. He utters a cry so like the wail of a human being that it is hard to believe a mere bird can do it.

"The loon is an accomplished fisherman and can dive as well as any expert, in fact he is known as the great diver. He swims like a fish and rides waves as easily as a sea-gull. The great speed with which he swims under water permits him to catch all the fish he wants for food.

"The loon is a peculiarly formed bird, the legs being set so far back under the tail that he almost topples over when walking on land, but this very thing gives him the power to propel swiftly in water.

"He builds a nest of grass and rushes as near the water as possible and two large eggs are laid and carefully hatched by the female.

"The keen desire of sportsmen to capture the birds that evaded them so cleverly, finally drove the loons of the Middle Atlantic States to find shelter in the north and west where primeval forest still protected them."

The Guide got up from her chair as a signal that the story-telling was over for the day, and the girls stretched out on the rug wishing the hour was ten instead of twelve.

"If you had all you wanted of one good thing you would never realise all the good things in store for you," said Miss Miller.

"I suppose lunch is a good thing, but when you have to get it before eating it, it somehow loses its quality of goodness," replied Hilda, getting up on hands and knees before standing erect.

"See how funny Hilda looks with her two pig-tails down over her head!" shouted Zan, while Hilda's head was bent low.

"That gives me an inspiration I needed for this afternoon's entertainment. I have been puzzled about Hilda's share in it. Now, if you girls will hurry to help with dinner, we can the sooner enjoy the surprise I have planned," said Miss Miller.

No further urging was necessary, for each anticipated a treat when Miss Miller spoke as she did.

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE THUNDER BIRD SPEAKS

**I**MMEDIATELY after dinner, the Band gathered again in the living-room and Miss Miller began showing the girls how to make different kinds of knots. This was something new and it proved very interesting although it took a long time before anything like a successful knot resulted from the many twists and snarls made in the rope.

Then, Miss Miller showed them how to make a threadlashing, and to splice a rope correctly. This also was unusual work and proved interesting.

"I want to have you each try for a degree of Frontier Scout and eight tests successfully taken along these lines will win the degree for you. I wanted to teach you how to solder a tin and temper a knife. You already know how to use an axe correctly, and knowing how to do the things shown you this afternoon will make seven altogether. I spoke to Bill the other day about showing you how to milk his cow, and he laughed but proved willing to teach," said Miss Miller.

"Oh, Miss Miller, save us that experience!" cried Jane.

"I'd be scared to pieces to go near that wild-looking animal, Miss Miller!" exclaimed Nita, fear shining from her eyes.

"Why, she wouldn't hurt you," laughed Zan.

"But just think! She may turn and butt me!" said Nita, shuddering at the idea.

"Ha, ha! She couldn't, Nita—her horns are worn off with age!" screamed Zan, the very suggestion of grey old Bossy butting making her double over.

"Well, I think I'd rather lose a degree or take some other test," insisted Nita, so the subject was dropped for the time being.

The next hour was given to making records in Tally Books, filling in claims and witnessing properly all the claims the girls were entitled to take, and then the question of how to win additional *coups* and grand *coups* started again. Whenever a pause occurred in camp routine and fun, that seemed to lack something to fill in, the subject of how to win *coups* was always the most interesting to discuss.

Zan had gone to the porch to bring in a bucket of drinking water and she now announced that the rain had ceased and she had seen enough blue sky to make an old maid's night-cap.

"I don't think it can last!" said the Guide.

"Oh, don't say it so dubiously, Miss Miller. Haven't we had enough of rain all week?" cried Jane.

"It is through now, however! The wind has veered!" exclaimed Hilda who had gone to the side-door and watched the weather-vane on the barn.

"The wind may change again within a moment's time," ventured the Guide.

"Oh, pshaw! We'd rather take a chance on the weather than stay cooped here any longer!" said Elena, backed by the sense of being shut up in a house, even though the day had been disagreeable.

"Well, are we going to start for the Bluff?" came from Zan.

"Yes, but we may as well take our left-over dinner with us. It won't be such fun to get that camp-fire burning in the soaked fire-place," replied Hilda.

As the suggestion was a good one, the girls each took a dish or pail and started on the trail to camp.

"It really is too bad we couldn't take the cheerful fire with us—but I left the wire shield in front of it, in case it blazes up again," remarked Nita.

"That was very thoughtful of you, dear. I quite forgot about the fire," admitted the Guide.

"We won't need it again, so it doesn't matter much," came from Jane.

"Supposing it begins to pour rain again before night—shall we run to the house for the night?" said Elena, who had been listening to Nita's conversation with the Guide.

"It won't rain any more, never fear!" called Zan.

Wickee was not fond of walking in wet leaves, or past bushes that showered water all over him as he passed, so he dropped to the rear of the line and walked carefully in the narrow pathway that had been well-worn during the past month.

At camp, everything looked dismal and uninviting. The rain had beaten through into the cupboard and all the groceries were sodden. It had trickled on top of the ice-chest and by following a groove in the lid, managed to force an entry inside. The consequence was that a pool of rain-water stood two inches deep about the ice, butter, pudding for supper, and other items that were floating about when the lid was raised.

"I hope to goodness, the cots are dry! And the crex mats in the tents!" complained Nita.

"Humph! Feel of the mats!" laughed Zan, jumping up and down in her tent to hear the water squash underneath the piece of matting.

"My bed's all dry!" shouted Jane joyously.

"So's mine!" came from Elena.

"I'm thankful to say that mine is dry, too!" said Miss Miller, prodding the mattress.

"I put the rubber blanket over mine, so I know it's dry as bones!" laughed Zan.

"That is what we all should have done, for the dampness will permeate even if the tents are water-proof," said the Guide, spreading the rubber over her cot.

The other girls followed Zan's idea and then came out to see what was to be done about supper.

Just as they sat down on some rustic stools that had been made by the Band during the past weeks, the sun shot forth a ray as if to say good-night. The birds refused to come out and greet it, however, and nature seemed too wet to rejoice at the tardy appearance of the sinking orb of day.

"Let's build a roaring fire of our dry wood and sit about it telling ghost stories!" suggested Jane, after supper.

So, it came to pass that at bedtime that night, five sought their cots in a shivery frame of mind, due to gruesome stories, at which each tried to outdo the other in relating.

It was quite dark and the wind, which had not shifted, was blowing weirdly through the forest, ever and anon sending a dripping leaf, or wet twig into the faces of the fearsome girls.

"I can't help thinking of that cheerful log we left burning in the fire-place at the house," called Jane.

"And what a delightful walk it would be through the woods and over the buckwheat field!" sneered Zan.

"So long, girls, I'm in bed!" came from Hilda's tent.

"Mark for you in the morning—slang!" quickly added Elena.

Miss Miller, although standing on a thoroughly soaked mat, listened to the girls with a smile. She had raised a faint remonstrance when the ghost stories had become nerve-quaking, but the girls laughed merrily and begged to continue.

Just as she was ready to jump into bed a crack of thunder sounded directly overhead and a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the woods.

Shrieks from the other tents did not tend to make matters more comfortable, for it was inevitable that a shower was about to get them.

"Close the flaps and see that your tents are all well secured!" called the Guide.



In a short time the wind tore along the clearing of the Bluff and tried to rip up anything that was not rooted in the soil. The rain came down in a deluge while thunder and lightning seemed to come simultaneously, until the girls hid their heads under the bed-covers.

The water finally managed to trickle through the seams of the canvas and soon little pools of water stood in the hollows formed by the sides of the forms under the covers. Miss Miller had wisely inspected the pegs and ropes that held her tent down taut, but the girls neglected the advice given them a short time before. They took for granted that all would be well with the tents.

Then, a lull in the storm gave the girls courage to call to each other, "It's over, thank goodness! We're still dry!"

But they spoke too soon. A few minutes afterward a flash and peal of thunder announced a second storm, still heavier than the first one. A regular hurricane blew up the slope from the roadway and at every gust the tents threatened to give up their hold and fly away with the cyclone. The girls hurriedly jumped from their beds and held on to the straining ropes.

"I know just how a ship-wrecked sailor feels when the shred of sail is about to be torn away in the squall!" shouted Zan, so as to be heard above the commotion the storm caused.

Although her canvas was safe, the Guide arose and hurriedly dressed in case she would be needed at either of the other tents.

She was just about to light a candle when a horrifying yell, as from one throat, came from Hilda's tent—or at least where the tent had been. A terrific gale of wind had forced a way under the canvas and lifted the tent clear off the ground and flung it against some trees. The girls were left exposed to the elements and no partiality was shown by the rain on account of meager clothing.

"Help! Girls, come and help us get the tent!" screamed Jane.

Miss Miller was about to open the flap of her tent when the wind blew out the lighted taper. She leaned over to place it on the stand when screams from Zan and the third tent announced some catastrophe. They had hurriedly opened the tent-flaps and the wind, taking advantage of the opportunity, blew in and at once filled the hollow canvas opening. In another second both tents were blown over and down against the ground.

All five girls flew to Miss Miller's remaining tent and clamoured for admittance—the water pouring down their backs and their feet wet from the soggy grass.

The Guide shouted for them to enter one at a time through the tiny crevice she made in the opening of the tent. They crowded inside and stood shivering and ready to weep at their predicament.

"What *shall* we do?" cried Nita, who had never been exposed to such rude behaviour of the wind or weather.

"We can run down to Sherwoods', but they won't have any beds! They only have one room upstairs, you know," said Zan.

"You horrid thing, you talk as if this was a picnic!" whimpered Hilda.

"It is. After it is over you'll all sit and laugh at the figures you're cutting now!" shouted Zan, grinning in a superior manner at her companions.

Suddenly Miss Miller clasped her hands. "Thank goodness, we carried the trunk of steamer rugs into my tent the other week when you needed more room in your tents! I've got them right here and you girls can drop those soaking gowns and wrap the blankets about you for warmth and comfort."

The four extra thick blankets were taken from the trunk and one from the Guide's bed, giving each girl one. Zan had held a match during the time Miss Miller had to open the trunk, but it had burned down and gone out again. In the thick darkness the girls took off their gowns and wrapped the dry blankets about their forms.

The storm ceased as suddenly as it arose, so the Band debated the possibility of reaching the farm house that night.

"I left that lovely fire!" said Nita, with a sigh.

"And it can't be more than nine o'clock!" added Hilda.

"I say, let's start! We can't be more uncomfortable than huddled here. And we certainly can't sleep in one cot!" suggested Zan.

"Wait until I see if I can find the candle I had when the deluge came," said Miss Miller, groping about for the table.

"We'll need more than one light, Miss Miller," said Zan.

"I'll see if I can find the small stump I had last night," replied the Guide, finding the matches and lighting one.

The candle was soon lit and the stump found, so all prepared to leave the shelter of the small tent and seek the house.

Zan carried the new candle while Miss Miller fastened a hat-pin in the bottom of the stump and carried that. The girls easily avoided bushes and long wet grass in crossing over the Bluff, although their moccasins soon squeaked with water.

"I wish I knew where the lantern was—it would be so much steadier a light," ventured Zan, from the rear.

"I left it at the house the other day—I forgot to bring it back to camp," admitted Elena.

"I wish we had made a law to make folks pay forfeits for forgetting!" snapped Zan, impatiently.

"What's the matter with you to make you so cross? You're well rolled up in that blanket and you've got the torch, too!" retorted Elena.

Zan bit her lip but said nothing. The truth of the matter was that she felt guilty in driving Miss Miller out in the night with a rubber blanket wrapped about her. Zan reasoned that all the trouble would have been avoided if they had all paid attention to Miss Miller's advice in the beginning and pitched their tents in good ground between the trees as she did. Her tent stood any gale, while theirs—well, compare them!

"Oh, gracious me! There goes my blanket!" cried Nita, as the article slipped from her back and fell in the grass.

Just as Zan stooped to hold the candle so Nita could see where to take hold of the blanket, a puff of wind snuffed it completely out.

"Pshaw! Did you ever see the likes!" growled Zan.

"Here, light it at mine!" called Miss Miller.

Plodding along the narrow trail, now on one side in the wet grass, now on the other where the bushes shook drops all over them, they finally came to the maple grove.

"Thank goodness, we are thus far!" sighed the Guide.

"And the worst bit to cross or I'll miss my guess!" retorted Zan.

"Oh, no, we'll soon be through and over the wall of the buckwheat field. There, we can skirt the edge of the wall until we come to your lawn," added Jane.

"If you're not mired before you get to the field," said Zan, warningly.

"Why, what do you mean?" cried several voices.

"The Sap bush generally oozes water after a heavy, rain like to-day's. If we feel water bubbling up about our feet we'd better come back here and go around the grove," said Zan.

"We've had days of dry weather and the rain will have soaked in the ground immediately, so I guess we are safe to cross," replied Miss Miller, wearily.

Zan said nothing more but waited anxiously.

They managed to get over the snake fence safely and part way through the grove when a strong wind blew the branches of the maples enough to shake down a quantity of water from the leaves. As troubles never come singly, the water fell upon both small flames and extinguished them, leaving the Band in total darkness.

"Zan knows the way, so we'll follow her," suggested Jane.

"Don't blame me if we get stuck!" grumbled Zan, as she unwillingly took the lead.

All went well for a short time and Zan began to congratulate the Band upon their speedy arrival at the house. She was about to make a remark of that kind to cheer them when one of her feet sunk down over five inches in water. The bubbling about her foot warned her to pull out quickly.

She did so and jumped back. But the girls behind had not heard the water gurgle and had kept right on after Zan. By the sudden spring backwards, Zan and the girl behind collided and both rolled down in the sodden grass.

"Couldn't you look where you were going!" half-cried Elena, as she tried to crawl upon her feet. One moccasin had dropped off and she could not find it in the tall grass.

"I *was* looking but it was so dark that the eyes I carry at the back of my head could not see you!" chuckled Zan, to whom a spill more or less in the wet woods meant nothing.

"I'll have my death of cold as it is, to say nothing of walking in bare feet through this soaked grass!" complained Elena.

"Instead of grumbling you ought to be glad you won't get anything worse than your death! Wet feet can't harm you if you've gone the limit, anyway!" retorted Zan, irritatingly.

"I wish my mother knew of the way I am soaked!" Elena continued, whining.

"Well, she won't, thank goodness! She'd use every speck of mustard in our cupboard, and keep us up all night to heat water in which to roll you and the mustard!" Zan replied.

"Are you two going to keep us here all night while you quarrel over some one who isn't here, nor even expected?" asked Jane, peevishly.

Miss Miller had quietly chosen the way back, determined to go about the grove if necessary, so she had not heard the altercation between Elena and Zan.

By taking the round-about way to reach the house the weary and worn Band did not cross the front lawn, but arrived at the back door. As the doors were never locked they soon were indoors and before the fire-place where Nita's log still blazed cheerily up the chimney.

"Girls, have any of you seen Wickee since he followed us to the woods this afternoon?" said Zan,

suddenly.

No one had, but all had heard the scratching at the front door.

"He wasn't at camp with us to-night, for he would have begged for supper," added Nita.

Some of the girls ran to the front door and, opening it, displayed Wickie on the door mat. He was perfectly dry and had been camping on the porch in preference to returning through the cold wet woods when his mistress went to camp that afternoon.

As Zan went out to the well to bring in a bucket of water, she called to all of the others, "Oh, come here and see Lake Superior!"

When Miss Miller and the girls reached the porch a strange sight, indeed, met their gaze. The torrents of rain that had fallen could not seep into the ground quickly enough and had run down from the gardens and grove, over the surface, until the lawn was reached. As the front lawn had a decided depression in the centre a lake about an acre in extent was the result.

"Imagine what would have happened if we had stumbled into this in the darkness, coming by the path we generally use?" said Miss Miller.

"We'd have had something worth Elena's crying over," said Jane.

"Well, I don't care, now! I'll be sick anyway after this soaking!" whimpered Elena.

"Indeed you won't! You'll go straight home if you continue that strain of thought here where all of us are proving that health is not subject to wet skins!" replied Miss Miller, sternly.

Elena was so amazed at the unexpected attitude of the Guide that she hurried into the house and said not another word of fear of sickness.

The girls assisted Miss Miller in making hot lemonade to warm their chilled bodies. Then, every one was ordered to rub down thoroughly with Turkish towels, and pop into bed under blankets which had been warmed through before the blazing fire.

No one felt the slightest discomfort from the drenching, but the girls all complained of the closeness of sleeping in rooms. They felt as if they were cramped in boxes.

"I don't know what we shall do at home. I begin to see what Daddy means when he says 'folks don't need over-heated homes and poorly ventilated rooms,'" sighed Zan.

"The doctor is perfectly right, too. Half the ills the present generation suffers from are caused by poor ready-made foods, lack of sufficient exercise through rapid-transit, and the sweetmeats and indolence two-thirds of our women indulge in, to say nothing of late hours, excitement and major evils," added Miss Miller.

"Daddy has written a book on just that subject, Miss Miller! How queer you should speak like he does. He thinks that this generation is using up the vitality and perfect health bestowed upon us by our ancestors, and if we don't start soon to build a fund for ourselves and our descendants we will dwindle into a puny race. That is why he is such a radical for less medicine and more common sense in every-day living," replied Zan.

"Well, we'll all read that book, Zan, when it is ready, and no doubt find out how to live better," said the Guide.

Breakfast was eaten in the house while the welcome sun streamed in at doors and windows, and the birds came out of their refuges and sang blithely to one another.

No one wanted to remain indoors any longer than was necessary, so they started for the Bluff as soon as dishes were washed. The water that had formed the pond on the lawn the night previous had soaked into the ground leaving the lawn a soggy looking place, indeed.

As the Band neared the Bluff the sound of rushing water made them look at each other in surprise.

"Oh, I bet anything, the terrific fall of rain has started a freshet! If it is, girls, it will be wonderful! Do let's run!" shouted Zan, leading the race.

"It is! it is! Look at that torrent pouring down the ravine and falling over the Bluff, Miss Miller!" cried Zan, excitedly, as they came out from the woods.

It certainly was a beautiful sight! The water that rushed down through the ravine roared over the Falls; the pool being encircled by the steep banks turned the water back on itself when it could find no outlet excepting the narrow stream at the lower end. Thus, a miniature whirlpool formed which added greatly to the wildness of the scene.

"Our tents are a fine mess!" exclaimed Elena, disgustedly, seeing the damage made by the wind the night previous.

"Humph! Miss Miller's stood all right! I see now why we should have chosen a spot as Miss Miller did—we, too, could have anchored our tents to the tree-trunks and had a better hold for our stakes than we found in the shallow ground here," admitted Zan, looking over the wreckage.

"I suppose the sooner we get busy rigging things up again, the better it will be for their drying out. All that bedding and the cots have to be dragged out and hung on bushes to dry!" said Jane.

"I'll go down and have Bill come up to help us. We will borrow a line from Mrs. Sherwood and hang the wet bedding on that," offered the Guide.

All that morning was spent in straightening out the damage of the night before, and when, finally,

tents were well secured alongside the tent of the Guide, the Band was ready for a big dinner.

The Guide had been attending to the cooking while the girls worked over their tents and beds, and at noon they all sat down to rest and enjoy a well-earned meal.

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE COUNCIL FIRE BURNS ON THE DROSS

As the days passed swiftly, filled with wholesome pleasures for the Band, the improvement in each individual was more marked, for the established unity of the work in itself made for greater effort in each.

Perhaps of the five girls, the greatest change was taking place in Nita's consciousness and demeanour. It seemed to her that she had been living in an unreal atmosphere all of her life and but just awakened to the real delight in living. Her being was over-flowing with a deep sense of gratitude for the Guide who had been so patient with her short-comings, and the unusual health, the result of regular hours, simple food, and natural environment, combined to create a joy that Nita could not account for. Quite often, Miss Miller would smile unseen, as she heard Nita trill a few notes of song that hummed through her memory.

The effect of association and the need of habitual watchfulness to overcome faults, made a marvellous improvement in the other girls, so that the Guide was the happiest one of the Band at the result of her experiment with Woodcraft.

Since the day Nita went driving with young Everton, not a sign had come from him, although Bill had said that the young rascal was away for a few weeks, with an aunt at the beach.

Toward the latter part of August, the Band decided to go on a Nature quest, bringing back any new specimen of bug, plant or reptile, they might be so fortunate as to find.

It was a perfect day not too warm, with a dazzling blue sky overhead. The woods and meadows echoed with song, and a general medley of sound from live creatures.

The girls were crossing a marshy bit of ground near the Big Bridge, when Jane caught sight of some beautiful spires of goldenrod, although it was early in the season for it.

"I'm going to pick some for our camp—you can wait or go on slowly!" called she, to the girls who were ahead.

Balancing on a flat stone near the bank she hoped to reach, she found herself directly under a bending mass of the golden bloom. Just as she reached up to pluck at the stem, a huge bumblebee flew out and hummed near her nose.

"Oo-oo! help!" cried Jane almost falling over with fright.

"What's the matter—a water-snake?" laughed Elena.

"No—but an awful big beast! As big and fierce as an eagle!" shouted Jane, laughing at herself, when the bee flew away.

Having secured the rod, Jane hurried after the girls and then confessed that the eagle was but a bumblebee.

"He wouldn't have stung you, Jane, even if you attempted his life! They are too good-natured for their own protection!" said the Guide, as they trudged along the field-path.

"Let's sit down by this hedge and have a story, Miss Miller," suggested Hilda, who loved to hear the Guide's nature stories.

"Just for a few moments, then! We must not waste any time."

"Tell us something about bees, Miss Miller. Now, that our hives have come and we are waiting for a swarm to live in them, we ought to know something about their habits," coaxed Hilda.

So, the Guide told the girls all she could remember from her experience with bees when she was a girl at home. She added, however, that so many wonderful inventions had come to make bee-culture easier and pleasanter since her time, that it would be better to secure a good book about bees. At the conclusion of her short talk, Miss Miller said, "Can any of you tell me what time the bee was first found of value to people?"

No one could, so Miss Miller changed her question. "Well, can you tell me why bees were so carefully guarded in the olden times—in Biblical days, for instance?"

Even this could not be answered by the girls, so Miss Miller explained.

"In those olden days sugar had been unheard of. The only sweetener they used was honey. Should the bees die off there would be no sweets. Consequently, people were most careful of their bees. Very few people to-day realise that honey used in cake instead of sugar keeps the cake much fresher and the flavour is richer."

Miss Miller got up from the grass and warned her charges that they would arrive nowhere if they did not start. With a general laugh at the Guide's eagerness to get somewhere, the girls jumped up, shook their short skirts and resumed the hike.

They reached the road that passed Hamilton's farm and had just turned down a narrow path that led across fields toward a wonderful wooded hill, with three of the girls leading, and Zan on the left side, Nita on the right side of the Guide, when Nita exclaimed at a gorgeous butterfly that flew over her head.

Catching the butterfly net from Zan's hand, she chased it, running swiftly down the pathway past the other girls. No sooner had she started off than a horse was heard galloping on the soft sod back of the Guide.

Miss Miller turned and saw a rider coming directly toward her. Thinking it might be a telegram or other message for her, she turned to meet him. As soon as she came within good sight of the rider, however, she saw to her chagrin that it was young Everton. She stood right in the path wondering what to do.

Everton rode up and expected the Guide to move out of his way. She, however, had made up her mind what to do.

"Beg pardon, are you eager to reach any destination?" asked the Guide, holding her ground so that the young man had to rein in his horse sharply.

"I am anxious to reach a friend of mine—but I do not see how that concerns you!" retorted the insolent youth.

Miss Miller noted the glint in the eyes that Nita had spoken of, and she recognised at once the peculiar power some had of hypnotic control so fatal to peace and happiness of others when employed for vicious ends instead of worthy help. She noted the deep-orange stain on fingers as well as the twitching of muscles and sallowness of skin that came from nicotine. Even his horse rebelled against the nervous twitching of hands that lacked the strength to control anything, least of all his own animal instincts.

"Young man, I have every reason to believe that you are molesting a young girl placed in my charge. Therefore, I must ask you to turn about and ride the other way, as we shall not allow you to communicate again with Nita," said Miss Miller, sternly.

"I refuse to acknowledge any authority from *you!* I don't know you, nor do you know me, although I have heard said that an impecunious school-marm is acting as governess to a few girls at the Baker farm," sneered the young man.

Zan was up in arms at once, but Miss Miller was not one to take offence, especially when the insult came from a source she thought less than the dirt under her feet.

"Zan, will you run after Nita and ask her if she wishes to meet this—this, ahem—creature! If she does not and he persists in annoying us he will be taught the penalty of a highwayman!"

The rider sneered again but wondered why the woman hesitated over his name. Had he but known that Miss Miller refused to give him the privilege of being called a man, and a boy was too innocent a name for him—thus her hesitation!

Nita was running back with her captured prize when Zan met her and hastily explained. Nita blanched and clung to Zan's arm. "Oh, I never want to meet him again! What shall I do?"

Everton had been idly flicking his crop over the nervous young mare's ears, and the animal resented it by pawing the ground. He took pleasure in watching the mare snort, so he persisted. Without further warning the young animal gave a side jump, cleared the low rim of brush that fringed the bank and galloped wildly across the broken field. The rider evidently lost control of his mount, for the horse soon came to the stream where it turned back to cross the road near Hamilton's farm.

Miss Miller and the girls had climbed the bank and were watching the unexpected ending of the interview. Without a second's hesitation the horse plunged down into the river and struggled through the water, up the opposite bank and on, on toward the barns where it had been reared.

The Guide saw it pass the gate-posts safely, then turned with a sigh of relief and hurried to join Nita, who was all alone when the incident took place.

"Oh, Miss Miller! what a queer ending to that talk!" breathed Nita, although she had not heard the drift of the conversation.

"Nita, let this incident prove to you that the Great Spirit will help and protect you in every way if you will only try to do your part and remain obedient to His loving ways. I was pondering how to get rid of young Everton and save you from any unpleasantness at the same time, when the matter was taken out of my hands entirely and disposed of by One who knows!"

The incident made a deep impression on all of the girls, and the walk was continued in silence for a time.

The birds and bees and gay butterflies, however, soon loosened their tongues and by the time the mountain was reached they were as happy as ever.

As they crossed a glade on the mountain side, the Guide heard a familiar buzzing from the direction of an old burnt-off stump of a hollow tree. She crept toward it softly, and held up a warning hand for the girls to keep quiet. They tip-toed after her quietly, and when she smiled they wanted to know what was the trouble.

"A wild-bees' nest in that tree! From the noise, I should say it was a large one, getting ready to leave and swarm. If only we had a hive here, we might get it! However, we will get the honey-comb when the bees come out and that will be a treat!"

"How can you tell when they're out?" asked Zan.

"When they swarm they always leave the comb. If they fly to another tree this home will be left alone," said Miss Miller.

"Miss Miller, I'm so anxious to start bee-culture that I'm wiling to run back and bring a hive here!" exclaimed Jane.

"Let me go with her to help?" cried Zan.

"Isn't it too far girls?" wondered the Guide.

"No—we'll hurry Bill into hooking up Cheokee to his light buck-board and drive back with the hive, across the path we just came by. From there to this place is not far!"

"Well, all right! Then we'll wait here and watch where the bees fly!" said the Guide, but the two girls had already left the place.

The girls sat down to wait and watch while the Guide explained many peculiarities of bees. In an incredibly short time Bill came back with the hive, the girls following with a wire mask and gloves and a tin pan.

Miss Miller was amazed at their return and Zan said, laughing at their faces "We met Mr. Hamilton drivin' to Bill's house. He wanted to buy some of Bill's leghorn hens, so we caught a ride all the way home. While Bill got the hive and tools we hooked up the horse and here we are!"

"An' just in time, too! Them bees is goin' t' swarm right clost by, Miss Miller, 'cause th' Queen is hangin' round that tree like as if she didn't want t' let go of it!" said Bill.

And so it proved. The queen soon fluttered away and circled about the glade for a few moments, then settled on a low-hanging bough of wild cherry tree. Instantly, a mass of buzzing, living creatures settled about her and the swarm was on—full blast!

When it had been successfully hived and the girls drew a long breath once more, Bill cracked his hands together in token of congratulation for himself.

"That's th' neatest job I ever did on bees! Not a single mishap, and th' queen in that as happy as can be!"

The hive was very carefully taken to the buck-board and two of the girls jumped up in the back to steady it on the way to camp, for Bill said it must not be jostled in the least.

The hive was placed just below the Bluff where the sun shone warmly upon it, and the rocks sheltered it from storms. The mass of honey taken from the hollow tree was placed in the pan and carried back, the other two girls and Miss Miller taking turns in carrying it.

A new interest thus created made the next week fly on wings, and the Band found to their chagrin and deep concern that September was fast approaching when they must break camp and return to the city.

"Oh, Miss Miller I shall never be able to breathe indoors again!" wailed Zan.

"And to think of wearing corsets and heeled shoes again! Oh, girls, what shall we do after this freedom!" added Jane, woefully.

"Oh, Miss Miller! do you remember the day we took our *coup* for the walking within the hour—how Nita had to sit down and take off her high-heeled slippers, rub her feet and go back in the wagon with you!" and Elena laughed at the memory.

"It wasn't so funny that day, Elena, but I've learned lots of things since then, and won a walking *coup*, too!" laughed Nita.

"And I noticed that you never wore those high-heeled slippers again!" added Zan.

"And never expect to again! I've found out what solid comfort I have missed in wearing freak shoes instead of sensible ones!" commented Nita.

All these things pleased Miss Miller immensely, for she saw permanent good in the summer's work. But one of the unlooked-for results of the camp that summer was revealed just before the Band prepared to pack up. Mrs. Sherwood came up one day and said, with tears in her eyes, how she would miss the happy family on the Bluff.

"Why," said she, turning to the Guide, "even Bill and me tried your new-fangled idee of sleepin' on'y we pulled our bed out on the porch. And say, Miss Miller, it really air fine, ain't it!"

"Do you mean to say that you have been sleeping out of doors, and never won a *coup*!" cried Zan, laughing.

"I don't know what your coo means, but I know we both like the nice sweet air of summer nights!" said Mrs. Sherwood.

"Do you still sleep on feathers?" asked the Guide.

"Naow, that's anuther queer thing! The first nights the featherbed was all right! Then Bill began squirmin' and sayin' it was too heatin'. Then I felt the same way, so we took it off one night and slept a heap better on the mattrass. Sense that, we've ben usin' th' plain mattrass!"

"Stick to it, and never go back to feather-beds, Mrs. Sherwood, and you'll feel a hundred percent better this winter," advised the Guide.

"Bill said somethin' 'bout your sayin' I ought to git rid of my stiff joints, an' d'ye know, girls!"

Sense I have hed to climb up an' down this hill so much every day, I reely am feelin' limber again! I'm shore I tuck off at least twenty pounds extra fat durin' this summer!" exclaimed the simple woman, gladly.

"My! That is some reducer! It ought to be advised to city folks who spend money on massage and Turkish baths!" laughed Hilda, while some of the girls thought to themselves that Mrs. Sherwood could lose another fifty pounds and not miss it.

The day before the Band planned to start back to the city, a letter came from the doctor saying that a whole Tribe of girls were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the Band of Wickeecheokee girls, each one eager to plead to be taken in the Band for the winter work.

Miss Miller laughed at the picture drawn by the doctor, and Zan pouted.

"We won't have half the fun when a lot of others are in with us!" complained Jane.

"Oh, yes, we will! The more the merrier! You have had such a nice time this summer, that you feel there can never be another as good. And, of course, twenty girls would be too many for the Bluff or the Farm," said the Guide.

"Why don't you think we shall come here again next summer?" asked Elena, sadly.

"Wait till you hear of the plan Dr. Baker and I have for the Tribe. You will be so far advanced in Woodcraft by that time that you will want to broaden out and follow after some of the big achievements planned by the Head Council in New York. Even this winter, you will often think of this summer and smile at the childish fears and foibles!" said Miss Miller, smiling.

Those last days a general washing had taken place. All the canvas, bedding, clothing and other things were washed in the stream just below the willow, Mrs. Sherwood assisting in all of the work. Toward evening Bill's horse was brought up and the Guide's patent cradle was used to carry the camp outfits back to the barn. It had been decided to store all tents and camping things on the farm until the next summer, so it spared Miss Miller a great deal of trouble.

The Bluff was finally left as free of any camp-signs as it had been before the Band arrived, all excepting the log cabin which had been completed and stood as a strong memorial of some girls' persistent effort and ideals.

And Miss Miller said, "No good Woodcrafter ever left a camp-spot in a disorderly condition. It must be vacated and left in as neat and clean a manner as Nature provided it."

Wickee was going back to the city with Zan and live at her house, but Cheokee was to be sent back to pasture on the Hamilton farm. It seemed as if the dear old horse knew the time for his friends' departure was nigh, for all the night previous to their leaving, he whinnied as he stood with his head over the lower half of the barn-door, watching every movement of the girls as they went in and out of the house. Finally, Zan said she could not stand Cheokee's mourning any longer, so she took Wickee with her and went up and had a long talk with the faithful old horse. Wickee was told to remain and keep Cheokee company that night, and she came out closing the barn door behind her.

Early the following morning, Bill drove up to the porch and placed the baggage in the wagon under the front seat, while the girls ran about saying good-bye to every corner and tree near the house.

"Oh, it doesn't seem like two months since we got out of this very wagon, does it?" sighed Nita, as they were driven through the stone gate-posts on the way to the train.

"No, and really, not very much has happened, has there?" said Jane, wonderingly.

"Not as men reckon happenings, dear. But the greatest of all happenings actually was experienced by each one of you, and that was, that you each have learned to know yourself and to make the most of all the good that the Great Spirit gave you to enjoy!" said the Guide, softly.

"Amen to that, says I!" came from Bill, in emphatic tones that made the sorrowful Band smile again.

## THE END

### FOOTNOTES:

[A] Author's childhood home.

[B] See "Birds Through the Year" by Albert Field Gilmore.

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### **Transcriber's Note**

Minor punctuation and printer errors were corrected.

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