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The Camp Fire Girls Do Their Bit

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The Camp Fire Girls Do Their Bit

OR, OVER THE TOP WITH THE WINNEBAGOS

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Author of The Camp Fire Girls Series

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THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS SERIES

A Series of Stories for Camp Fire Girls Endorsed by
the Officials of the Camp Fire Girls Organization

By *Hildegard G. Frey*

The Camp Fire Girls in the Maine Woods
or, The Winnebago's Go Camping

The Camp Fire Girls at School
or, The Wohelo Weavers

The Camp Fire Girls at Onoway House
or, The Magic Garden

The Camp Fire Girls Go Motoring
or, Along the Road That Leads the Way

The Camp Fire Girls Larks and Pranks
or, The House of the Open Door

The Camp Fire Girls on Ellen's Isle
or, the Trail of the Seven Cedars

The Camp Fire Girls on the Open Road
or, Glorify Work

The Camp Fire Girls Do Their Bit
or, Over The Top With the Winnebago's

THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS DO THEIR BIT

CHAPTER I

A DREAM COMES TRUE

The long train, which for nearly an hour had been gliding smoothly forward with a soothing, cradling motion of its heavy trucked Pullmans, and a crooning, lullaby sound of its droning wheels, came to a jarring stop at one of the mountain stations, and Lieutenant Allison awakened with a start. The echo of the laugh that he had heard in his dream still sounded in his ears, a tantalizing, compelling note, elusive as the Pipes of Pan, luring as a will-o'-the-wisp. Above the bustle of departing and incoming passengers, the confusion of the station and the grinding of the wheels as the train started again that haunting peal of laughter still rang in his ears, still held him in its thrall, calling him back into the dream from which he had just awakened. Still heavy with sleep and also somewhat light-headed---for he had been traveling for two days and the strain was beginning to tell on him, although the doctors had at last pronounced him able to make the journey home for a month's furlough---he leaned his head against the cool green plush back-rest and stared idly through half-closed eyelids down the long vista of the Pullman aisle. Then his pulses gave a leap and the blood began to pound in his ears and he thought he was back in the base hospital again and the fever was playing tricks on him. For down in the shadowy end of the aisle there moved a figure which his sleep-heavy eyes recognized as the Maiden, the one who had flitted through his weeks of delirium, luring him, beckoning him, calling him, eluding him, vanishing from his touch with a peal of silvery laughter that echoed in his ears with a haunting sweetness long after she and the fever had fled away together in the night, not to return. And now, weeks afterward, here she stood, in the shadowy end of a Pullman aisle, watching him from afar, just as she had stood watching in those other days when he and the fever were wrestling in mortal combat.

He had known her years before he had the fever. Somewhere in his dreamy, imaginative boyhood he had read the Song of Hiawatha, and his glowing fancy had immediately fastened upon the lines which described the Indian girl, Minnehaha, Laughing Water, daughter of the old arrow-maker in the land of the Dacotahs:

"With him dwelt his dark-eyed daughter,
Wayward as the Minnehaha,
With her moods of shade and sunshine,
Eyes that smiled and frowned alternate,
Feet as rapid as the river,
Tresses flowing like the water,
And as musical a laughter;
And he named her from the river,
From the waterfall he named her,
Minnehaha, Laughing Water."

The image thus conjured up remained in his mind, a tantalizing vision, until at last he found himself filled with a desire to find a maiden like the storied daughter of the ancient arrow-maker in the land of the Dacotahs, dark-eyed, slender as an arrow, sparkling like the sunlight on the water, with laughter like the music of the Falls. Sometimes he saw her in his dreams, and through the long weeks in the hospital at the aviation camp when he had the fever she was with him constantly, beckoning, calling, luring him back to life when he was about to slip over the edge into the bottomless abyss, her laughter ringing in his ears after she had vanished into the mists. Then one night she and the fever had fled hand in hand and after that he could not recall her image, though her memory still tantalized him.

Not until today, when the soothing motion of the long Pullman car and the lullaby droning of the wheels had lulled him to sleep with his elbow on the windowsill and his head resting on his thin, transparent hand, did she come back to him in a dream. In that daytime nap he had suddenly heard her laughter ring out and with flying footsteps followed the sound,

hoping to come upon her at every turn, but just when he was about to overtake her the train stopped with a jerk and startled him back into consciousness, with the echo of her laughter still ringing in his ears.

And now, when his pursuit had been vain and her luring laughter had died away in his ears, she came back and stood in the shadowy end of the aisle, watching him with large, luminous eyes, just as she used to come and watch him wrestle with the fever. Breathless, he looked at her, waiting for her to vanish, but she did not. Then it came to him that he might go to her, might reach her this time before she fled. But something lay on his shoulder, something that weighed him down and kept him from moving, kept him from rising and going to her. He tried to shake it off, but it remained. He tried again, keeping his eyes on her all the time. Then the long vista of green plush seats leading to her was blotted out and he found himself gazing into a dusky countenance, while an unctuous voice murmured in his ear:

"How you feelin', Looten't? Gettin' light-headed, wasn't you? Here's the milk you ordered for two o'clock. Just drink it now, Looten't, and you'll feel all right."

Robert Allison mechanically reached out his hand for the glass of milk which the solicitous porter held out to him and dutifully drank it, while the porter hovered over him like an anxious hen, clucking out a constant stream of encouraging remarks.

The porter and the glass finally disappeared down the aisle, and Robert Allison, now wide awake and flooded with returning energy, remembered with a whimsical smile the illusion that had overtaken him at midday. He glanced boldly down the aisle to assure himself that his mind was now free from phantoms. The heavy foliage along the mountainside, through which they had been passing, and which had created a twilight atmosphere in the car, had given way to wide open fields, and the long corridor was flooded from end to end with glaring June sunlight. Robert Allison caught his breath with a start and dug his thumb-nail into the palm of his hand to make sure he was awake. For the illusion of a moment ago was not an illusion at all; she was a flesh and blood girl; she had left her shadowy foothold in the far end of the car and was coming down the aisle toward him. Spellbound, he waited as she approached, slim as a fawn, erect as an arrow, moving as lightly as the ripples that danced upon the surface of the river along whose banks they were rolling. Whether or not she was the image of the vision in his fever dream he would never be able to tell, for already the dream phantom was fading from his mind and the reality taking its place; the Laughing Water of his boyhood fancy had come to life in the person of this slim young girl who was moving down the aisle toward him.

Stupidly he had thought she was coming directly to him, and he experienced a shock of surprise when she passed him with no more than a casual glance. Even with her indifferent passing a thrill seemed to go through him; his blood began to sing in his veins, and through his mind there flashed again the lines which had stirred his boyhood fancy years ago:

"She the moonlight, starlight, firelight,
She the sunshine of her people,
Minnehaha, Laughing Water!"

CHAPTER II

IN THE TRAIN

Sahwah the Sunfish came tripping blithely down the Pullman aisle to rejoin the Winnebagos after a sojourn on the platform with the brakeman, whom she left exhausted with answering questions. When Sahwah traveled she traveled with all her might and there was nothing visible to the naked eye that she did not notice, inquire about, and store up for future reference. She observed down to the last nail wherein a Pullman differed from a day coach; she found out why the man ran along beside the train at the stations and hit the wheels with a hammer; why the cars had double windows; what

the semaphore signals indicated; why the east-bound freight trains were so much more heavily loaded than the west-bound; she noticed that there were no large steamboats running on the Susquehanna, although it looked like a very large river; she counted the number of times they crossed the river on the run through the Alleghenies; she noticed the different varieties of trees that grew along the mountain sides; she scrutinized every passenger in the car and tried to guess who they were, what their business was and where they were going. Sahwah's mind was like a photographic plate; everything she looked at became imprinted there as upon a negative, accurate in every detail. Like the Elephant's Child, Sahwah was full of 'satiableness', and her inquisitive trunk was always stretched out in a quivering search for information.

The brakeman, an amiable personage, was interested in her thirst for knowledge of railway affairs, and answered her innumerable questions in patient detail until his head began to buzz and he began to feel as though he were attached to a suction pump.

"Goodness gracious, child, what do you think I am, an encyclopedia?" he exploded at last, and sought refuge in the impenetrable regions at the forward end of the long train.

Sahwah, deprived of her source of information, turned to join her traveling companions, Gladys and Hinpoha and Migwan, up in the other end of the car. She stood for a moment at the water cooler, looking down the car at the people facing her and indulging in her favorite pastime of trying to read their faces. The car was crowded with all kinds of people, from the stately, judicial-looking man who sat in front of the Winnebagos to a negro couple on their honeymoon. There was a plentiful sprinkling of soldiers throughout the car and one or two sailors. Sahwah looked at them with eager interest and classified their different branches of service by the color of the cord on their hats. One Artillery, three Infantry, one Ambulance Corps and one Lieutenant of Aviation, she checked off, after a long and careful scrutiny of the last one, whose insignia puzzled her at first.

A porter brushed by her as she stood there with a glass of milk in his hand. Sahwah watched the progress of the milk idly, and the porter stopped beside the Lieutenant of Aviation with it. The lieutenant seemed to be asleep, for the porter had to shake him before he became aware of his existence. Just then Hinpoha caught Sahwah's eye and motioned her to come back to her seat, and Sahwah went tripping down the aisle to join her friends. She glanced casually at the young lieutenant as she passed him; he was staring fixedly at her and she dropped her eyes quickly. A little electric shock tingled through her as she met his eyes; he seemed to be about to speak to her. "Probably mistook me for someone else and thought he knew me," Sahwah thought to herself, and dismissed him from her mind.

"Where have you been all this while?" asked Hinpoha with a perspiring sigh, laboriously "knitting backward" across the length of the needle in vicious pursuit of a stitch that should have been eliminated in the process of decreasing for the heel turn.

"Pursuing knowledge," replied Sahwah merrily, settling herself in the seat beside Hinpoha, facing Migwan and Gladys.

The four girls were on their way to spend the summer vacation with their beloved Guardian, Nyoda, at her home in Oakwood, the little town in the hills of eastern Pennsylvania where she had lived since her marriage to Andrew Sheridan---"Sherry"---the summer before. Sherry was in France now with the Engineers, and Nyoda, lonesome in the huge old house to which she had fallen heir at the death of her last relative, old Uncle Jasper Carver, had invited the Winnebagos to come and spend the summer with her.

Vacation had begun inauspiciously for the Winnebagos. To their great disappointment Katherine wrote that she was not coming east after all; she was going to remain in Chicago with Miss Fairlee and help her with her settlement work there. They had rejoiced so at the first news of her coming and had so impatiently awaited the time of her arrival that the

disappointment when it came was much harder to bear than if they had never looked forward to her coming. As Sahwah remarked, she had her appetite all fixed for Katherine, and nothing else would satisfy her. The news about Katherine had only been one of a series of disappointments.

Hinpoha had been called home the week before college closed officially, to attend the funeral of Dr. Hoffman, Aunt Phoebe's husband, whose strenuous work for his "boys" in the military camp during the past year had been too much for his already failing strength, and Aunt Phoebe, worn out with the strain of the last months, had announced her intention of closing the house and going to spend the summer with a girlhood friend on the Maine coast. Hinpoha had the choice of going with her or spending the summer with Aunt Grace, who had a fractured knee and was confined to an invalid's chair.

Migwan had come home from college with over-strained eyes and a weak chest and had been peremptorily forbidden to spend the vacation devouring volumes of Indian history as she had planned, and had a lost, aimless feeling in consequence.

Sahwah, thanks to the unceasing patriotic activities of Mrs. Osgood Harper during the previous winter, found herself unexpectedly in possession of a two months' vacation while her energetic employer recuperated from her season's labors in a famous sanatorium. As Sahwah had not expected a vacation and had made no plans, she found herself, as she expressed it, "all dressed up and no place to go."

For Gladys's father, head over heels in the manufacture of munitions, there would be no such glorious camping trip as there was the summer before, and Mrs. Evans refused to go away and leave him, so Gladys had the prospect of a summer in town, the first that she could recollect.

"I can't decide which I shall do," sighed Hinpoha plaintively to the other three, who had foregathered in the library of the Bradford home one afternoon at the beginning of the summer. "I know Aunt Phoebe would rather be alone with Miss Shirley, because her cottage is small, and it would be dreadfully dull for me besides; but Aunt Grace will be laid up all summer and she has a fright of a parrot that squawks from morning until night. Oh, dear, why can't things be as they were last year?"

Then had come Nyoda's letter:

Dearest Winnebagos:

Can't you take pity on me and relieve my loneliness? Here I am, in a house that would make the ordinary hotel look like a bandbox, and since Sherry has gone to France with the Engineers it's simply ghastly. For various reasons I do not wish to leave the house, but I shall surely go into a decline if I have to stay here alone. Can't you come and spend your vacations with me, as many of you as have vacations? Please come and amuse your lonesome old Guardian, whose house is bare and dark and cold.

Sahwah tumbled out of her chair with a shout that startled poor Mr. Bob from his slumbers at her feet and set him barking wildly with excitement; Migwan and Gladys fell on each other's necks in silent rapture, and Hinpoha began packing immediately. Just one week later they boarded the train and started on their journey to Oakwood.

Sahwah sat and looked at the soldiers in the car with unconcealed envy. Her ever-smouldering resentment against the fact that she was not a boy had since the war kindled into red rage at the unkindness of fate. She chafed under the restrictions with which her niche in the world hedged her in.

"I wish I were a man!" she exclaimed impatiently. "Then I could go to war and fight for my country and---and go over the top. The boys have all the glory and excitement of war and the girls have nothing but the stupid, commonplace things to do. It isn't fair!"

"But women *are* doing glorious things in the war," Migwan interrupted quickly. "They're going as nurses in the hospitals right at the front; they're working in the canteens and doing lots of other things right in the thick of the excitement."

"Oh, yes, *women* are," replied Sahwah, "but *girls* aren't. Long ago, in the days before the war, I used to think if there ever *would* be a war the Camp Fire Girls would surely do something great and glorious, but here we are, and the only thing we can do is knit, knit, knit, and fold bandages, and the babies in the kindergarten are doing *that*. We're too *young* to do anything big and splendid. We're just schoolgirls, and no one takes us seriously. We can't go as nurses without three years' training---we can't do *anything*. There might as well not *be* any war, for all I'm doing to help it. Boys seventeen years old can enlist, even sixteen-year-old ones, and go right to the front, but a girl sixteen years old isn't any better off than if she were sixteen months. I'm nearly nineteen, and I wanted to go as a stenographer, but they wouldn't consider me for a minute. Said I was too young." Sahwah threw out her hands in a tragic gesture and her brow darkened.

"It's a shame," Hinpoha agreed sympathetically. "In books young girls have no end of adventures in war time, girls no older than we; they catch spies and outwit the enemy and save their lovers' lives and carry important messages, but nothing like that will ever happen to us. All we'll ever do is just stay at home peacefully and knit."

Hinpoha gave an impatient jerk and the knitting fell into her lap with a protesting tinkle of needles, while the stitch which she was in the act of transferring slipped off and darted merrily away on an excursion up the length of the sock. Hinpoha threw up her hands in exasperation.

"That's the third time that's happened in an hour!" she exclaimed in a vexed tone. "I hope the soldiers appreciate how much trouble it is to keep their feet covered. I'd rather fight any day than knit," she finished emphatically.

"Here, let me pick up the dropped stitches for you," said Migwan soothingly, reaching over for the tangled mess of yarn. "You're getting all tired and hot," she continued, skilfully pursuing the agile and elusive dropped stitches down the grey woolen wake of the sock and bringing them triumphantly up to resume their place in the sun.

"It takes me an age to get a pair of socks done for the Red Cross," Hinpoha grumbled on, "and they're as cross as two sticks if you drop a single stitch! That woman down at headquarters made the biggest fuss about the last pair I brought in, just because I'd slipped a stitch in the wrong place---it hardly showed a bit---and because one sock was an inch longer than the other. War isn't a bit like I thought it would be," she sighed plaintively, with a vengeful poke at the knitting, which Migwan had just restored to her.

Poor romantic Hinpoha, trying to sail her ship of rosy fancies on a sea of stern reality, and finding it pretty hard sailing! Leaning back against the green plush of the train seat, which set off like an artist's background the burnished glory of her red curls, and dreaming regretfully of the vanished days when chivalry rode on fiery steeds and ladies fair led much more eventful lives than their emancipated great-granddaughters, it never occurred to her---nor to the rest of the Winnebagos either, for that matter---that romance might have become up to date along with science and the fashions, and that in these modern days of speed and efficiency High Adventure might purchase a ticket at the station window and go faring forth in a Pullman car. So Hinpoha dreamed dreams of the way she would like things to happen and built airy castles around the Winnebagos as heroines; but little did she suspect that another architect was also at work on those same castles, an architect whose lines are drawn with an indelible pencil, and whose finished work no man may reject.

Hinpoha did not resume her knitting again. She opened her hand bag and drew forth her mirror, and propping it up against her knee, proceeded to arrange the curls that had escaped from their imprisoning pins and were riding around her ears. Then she put the mirror back and drew out a bottle of hand lotion and examined the stopper. She slipped it in and out several times and then idly dropped a few violet petals from the bunch at her belt into the bottle, shaking it about to make them whirl, and then holding it still to watch them settle.

"It looks as though you were telling fortunes," remarked Sahwah, watching the petals alternately whirl and sink, "like tea leaves, you know."

Hinpoha brightened at once and animation came back into her face. Better than anything else under the sun, Hinpoha loved to tell fortunes.

"Do you want me to tell yours, Sahwah?" she asked eagerly.

Sahwah agreed amiably; she did not care two straws about fortune-telling herself, but she knew Hinpoha's hobby and willingly submitted to countless "readings" of her future, in various ways, by the ardent amateur seeress.

Hinpoha shook the bottle energetically, and then watched intently as the petals gradually ceased whirling and came to rest at the bottom of the bottle.

"There is a stranger coming into your life," she began impressively, "awfully thin, and light."

"Like the syrup we had on our pancakes in the station this morning," murmured Migwan.

Sahwah and Gladys giggled; Hinpoha frowned. "All right, if you're going to laugh at me," she began.

"Go on, we'll be good," said Migwan hastily.

"Tell us some more about the light-haired stranger. Please tell us when he is coming into her life, so we can be there to see."

"He has already come," announced Hinpoha, after thoughtfully squinting into the bottle.

"News to me," laughed Sahwah, amused at the seriousness with which Hinpoha delivered her revelations. "Oh, I know who it is," she continued, giggling. "It's the brakeman. He was a Swede, with the yellowest hair you ever saw. He was awfully skinny, too. He was very polite, and told me everything he knew, and then went away to find out some more."

Migwan and Gladys shouted; Hinpoha pouted and snatched up the bottle, shaking it with offended vigor, setting the petals whirling madly and breaking up the "cast" of Sahwah's fortune.

"There was another man, too," she announced, with a don't-you-wish-you'd-waited air, "but I won't tell you about him now. He was awfully queer, too; he was there twice, and once he was dark and once he was light!"

"How do you know it was the same one?" inquired Gladys curiously.

"Because it *was*," replied Hinpoha knowingly.

"Maybe he faded," suggested Sahwah, giggling again.

"No, he didn't," replied Hinpoha mysteriously, "because he was light *first* and dark *afterward*!"

Hinpoha's voice rang out like an oracle, and the judicial-looking man in the seat ahead of them turned around and surveyed the four with a smile of amusement on his face.

"That man's laughing at us," said Sahwah, feeling terribly foolish. "Quit telling fortunes, Hinpoha. It's all nonsense, anyhow."

"Maybe *you* think it's nonsense," returned Hinpoha in an offended tone, "but they do come true, lots of times. Do you remember, Gladys, the time I told you you were going to get a letter from a distance, and you got one from France the very next day?"

"Yes," replied Gladys, "and do you remember the time you predicted I was going to flunk math at midyears and I took the prize?"

"And do you remember the light man that came into *your* life, Hinpoha?" said Sahwah slyly.

Hinpoha turned fiery red at this reference to Professor Knoblock and looked out of the window in confused silence. Sahwah realized that she was figure-skating on thin ice when she mentioned that subject and forebore to make any further remarks. A strained silence fell upon the four. Migwan cast about in her mind for a topic of conversation that would relieve the tension.

"Has anyone heard from Veronica lately?" she asked.

"I haven't heard from her for several months," replied Sahwah, "but I suppose she's still in New York. She must be doing great things with her music. She's given a concert already."

"It's queer about Veronica," continued Sahwah musingly. "Although she wasn't with us so much I seem to miss her more and more as time goes on. I often dream I hear her playing her violin." Sahwah's admiration for Veronica had never waned, although Veronica had never had what Sahwah described as a "real emotional case" on her.

"Veronica's an alien enemy now," said Gladys in an awed tone.

"Do you think she'll be *interred*?" asked Hinpoha anxiously.

Sahwah gave a little scream of laughter. "*In-terned*, not *interred*," she corrected. "I hope Veronica isn't ready to be buried yet."

"Well, *interned*, then," answered Hinpoha, a little piqued at Sahwah's raillery. "You don't need to call the attention of the whole car to the fact that I made a little mistake. Did you see that officer over there turn around and look when you laughed? He's looking yet, and he probably heard what you said, and is laughing at me in his mind."

Sahwah involuntarily turned around and her eyes met those of the slim, fair-haired youth in the uniform of a lieutenant of aviation, sitting several seats beyond them on the other side of the car. For some unaccountable reason she again felt suddenly shy and dropped her eyes, while a little feeling of wonder stole over her at her own embarrassment. Up until that moment, unexplained feelings had been totally unknown in Sahwah's wholesome and vigorous young life. There had been nothing bold or offensive about the stranger's glance, yet there was a certain curious intentness about it that filled Sahwah with a strange confusion, a vague stirring within her of something unfamiliar, something unknown.

Outwardly there was nothing remarkable about him, nothing to distinguish him from the thousands of other lads in khaki that were to be seen everywhere one went, erect, trim, lovably conceited. Why, then, should the heart of Sahwah the Sunfish suddenly flutter at this casual meeting of the eyes with the man across the way, and why did she turn sharply around and look out of the window?

Then a curious thing happened. The sunlight, which was so bright it was making the others squint and draw the curtains, suddenly seemed to Sahwah to be darkened, while a nameless fear stole into her heart and oppressed her with a sense of lurking danger, of hovering calamity. Only for a minute it lasted, and then she was herself again and the sunshine struck into her eyes with intolerable splendor.

She shook herself slightly and turned her attention to Hinpoha, who was speaking.

"Wouldn't it be dreadful if Veronica were to be interned?" Hinpoha was saying.

"Veronica won't be interned," said Sahwah with an air of authority. "It's only the Germans who are being watched so carefully, and have to register with the police, and all that. Veronica isn't a German citizen, she's a Hungarian. She will be perfectly safe. Her uncle is an American citizen and is very patriotic; he was on the last Liberty Loan committee."

"I wonder how she feels about things?" said Gladys musingly. "Her father was in the Austrian army, you remember, and died fighting, and her mother died when their town was taken by the Russians, and Veronica just barely escaped with her own life. Their home was burned and they lost everything they had. Veronica would be very wealthy if it hadn't been for the war. It would be only natural for her to feel bitter toward the side that had brought suffering to her family."

"But that was in the early days of the war, before so many things had happened," said Sahwah, "and before Veronica had ever seen America. She's crazy about America. She certainly wouldn't feel bitter toward the Americans because the Russians burned their town and killed her father, would she?"

"Poor Veronica," said Gladys softly. "She's in a hard position and I don't envy her. I love her dearly, even if her country *is* our enemy."

"Shucks!" exclaimed Sahwah. "Veronica isn't to blame because her country is at war. *She* isn't our enemy. Anyway," she added, "I don't believe that the Hungarians are as bad as the Germans. They aren't spies like the Germans are. Why, lots of Hungarians are fighting right in our own army! Probably if Veronica's father had come to America years ago he would be doing the same thing now. Anyway, Veronica's here now, and she's glad she *is* here, and I don't think it's right to treat her coldly just because she's an 'alien enemy.'"

"Maybe she's still loyal to her own country, though," said Hinpoha, "and if the chance ever came to help Hungary's cause she'd feel in duty, bound to do it. She has such intense feelings about things, you know. She'd be quite willing to die for any cause she believed in."

"Shucks!" said Sahwah again. "Your romantic notions make me tired sometimes, Hinpoha. Veronica's not going to die for Hungary's cause, and she isn't likely to die for any other cause either, any more than we are."

"But we'd be *willing* to die for America's cause, wouldn't we?" demanded Hinpoha, with rising excitement.

"We certainly would!" replied Sahwah, with a fine flash from her brown eyes.

"Well, if we'd be perfectly willing to die for *our* country's cause, why wouldn't Veronica be willing to die for *hers*?" demanded Hinpoha triumphantly.

"What I meant mostly," said Sahwah, skillfully diverting a discussion that was becoming decidedly heated, "was that none of us are likely to get a chance to die for our country, and neither is Veronica going to get a chance to die for hers, or do anything else for it, even if she were willing to. She's just a schoolgirl like ourselves and nobody would think of asking her to do anything."

"That's the trouble," sighed Hinpoha discontentedly. "We're just girls, and the only thing we'll ever get to do is just knit, knit, knit, and there's no glory in that. That's the only 'bit' we'll ever be able to do."

The other three echoed her sigh and reflected sadly upon their circumscribed sphere, and Sahwah's dream of being another Joan of Arc flickered out into darkness. Then she brightened again as her thoughts took a new turn.

"Well, there's one thing we have to be thankful for," she said feelingly. "If we can't help to make history, we won't have to learn it, either. We're past the history part of school. But just think what the pupils will have to learn in the years to come---and the names of all those battles that are being fought every day now, and the unpronounceable names of all those cities in Europe, and all the different generals. It was hard enough to keep the Civil War generals straight, and there were only *two* sets of them---think of having to remember all the American and English and French and Italian and Russian ones, to say nothing of the German! Why, it will be such a chore to study history that the pupils won't have time to study anything else! People always look at little babies and say how fortunate they are; when they grow up the war will be over and everything lovely again, but I always think, 'Poor things, wait until they have to study history!' How lucky we are to be living through it instead of having to learn it out of books!"

All the while Sahwah was talking, Hinpoha had been watching with undisguised interest a man who sat in the seat directly across the aisle from them, who, with an artist's sketching pad on his knee, was drawing caricatures with a thick black pencil. Hinpoha, clever artist that she was herself, took a lively interest in anyone else who could draw, and from the glimpses she could get of the sketches being made across the aisle, she recognized the peculiar genius of the artist. She attracted the attention of the other three, and they too watched in wonder and with ever-growing interest. The artist finally looked up, saw the four eager pairs of eyes fastened on him, and nodding in a friendly way, handed his sketch-book across the aisle.

"Would you like to see them?" he asked genially, his eye lingering on Hinpoha's glory-crowned head with artistic appreciation.

He himself looked like the typical artist one sees in pictures. His hair was long and wavy and his blond beard was trimmed in Van Dyke fashion. Hinpoha nearly burst with admiration of him, and when he became aware of her existence and offered to show his sketches she was in a flutter of joy.

"Oh, may we?" she exclaimed delightedly, taking the book from his hand.

"Oh, lookee!" she squealed in rapture to the other girls. "Did you ever see anything so quaint?"

The others looked and also exclaimed in wonder and delight. There were pictures of trains running along on legs instead of wheels, of houses and barns whose windows and doors were cunningly arranged to form features, of buildings that sailed through the air with wings like birds'; of drawbridges with one end sticking up in the air while an enormously fat man sat on the other end; of ships walking along on stilts that reached clear to the bottom of the ocean!

"Oh, aren't they the most fascinating things you ever saw?" cried Sahwah, enraptured.

Utterly absorbed, she did not see the lieutenant of aviation gather up his things to leave the train at one of the way stations; was not aware that he paused on his way out and looked at her for a long, irresolute minute and then went hastily on.

The last page in the book of sketches had not been reached when the train came to a stop right out in the hills, between stations.

"What's the matter?" everybody was soon asking.

Heads were popped out of windows and there was a general rush for the platforms, as the sounds outside indicated excitement of some kind.

"Two freight trains collided on the bridge and broke it down," was the word that passed from mouth to mouth. "The train will be delayed for hours."

Dismayed at the long wait in store for them, the Winnebagos sat down in their seats again, prepared to make the best of it, when the judicial-looking gentleman who had been sitting in front of them came up and said, "Pardon me, but I couldn't help overhearing you girls talking about going to Oakwood. I am going to Oakwood myself---I live there---and I know how we can get there without waiting hours and hours for this train to go on. We are only about twenty miles from Oakwood now and right near an interurban car line. We can go in on the electric car and not lose much time. I will be glad to assist you in any way possible. My name is Wing, Mr. Ira B. Wing."

"Not Agony and Oh-Pshaw's father!" exclaimed Hinpoha. "I knew they lived in Oakwood, but----"

"The same," interrupted Mr. Wing, smiling broadly. "Are you acquainted with my girls?"

"Are we?" returned Hinpoha. "Ask them who roomed next to them this last year at Brownell! Do we know the Heavenly Twins! Isn't it perfectly wonderful that you should turn out to be their father! We were having a discussion a while ago as to whether you were a lawyer or a professor, and Sahwah---excuse me, this is Miss Brewster, Mr. Wing, another one of the Winnebagos, that the Twins don't know---yet---Sahwah insisted that you were a lawyer and I insisted you were a professor, and now Sahwah was right after all. You *are* a lawyer, aren't you? I believe Agony said you were."

"I am," replied Mr. Wing with a twinkle in his eye, "and I'm more than delighted to meet you. Come along, and we'll see if we can't get to Oakwood before dark."

Then the whimsical artist came up and addressed Mr. Wing. "Did I hear you say you could get to Oakwood on the electric?" he inquired. "I'm going there too. My name is Prince, Eugene Prince."

"Glad to meet you," replied Mr. Wing heartily. "Come along." He summoned the porter to carry out the various suitcases.

Before long the little party were aboard the electric car, and reached Oakwood almost as soon as they would have if the train had not been held up. The electric car went by the railway station and the Winnebagos got off, because Nyoda would be waiting for them there. Mr. Wing and the artist went on to the center of the town.

CHAPTER III

CARVER HOUSE

Nyoda was waiting for them on the platform, looking just as she used to, radiant, girlish, enthusiastic, bubbling over with fun. Not a shade of sadness or anxiety in her face betrayed the loneliness in her heart and her longing for the presence of the dear man she had sent forth in the cause of liberty. In respect to sorrows, Nyoda's attitude toward the world had always been, "Those which are yours are mine, but those which are mine are my own."

Encircled by four pairs of Winnebago arms and with eager questions being hurled at her from all sides, it seemed as if the old times had come again indeed.

"Sahwah! Migwan! Hinpoha! Gladys!" she exclaimed joyfully, looking at them with beaming eyes. "My own Winnebagos! But come, I'm dying to show you my new playhouse," and she led the way across the station platform to where her automobile stood waiting.

A swift spin along a quiet avenue bordered with immense old oaks that stood like rows of soldiers at attention, and up quite a steep hill, from which they could look back upon the houses and buildings clustering in the valley, which was the heart of the town, and then they drew up before a very old brick house which stood on the summit of the hill. It had green blinds and a fanlight over the front door, and a brick walk running from the front steps to the street, bordered on each side by a box hedge in a prim, Ladies' Garden effect like one sees in the illustrations of children's poems.

"Oh, Nyoda, how splendid!" cried Hinpoha, her artistic soul delighted beyond measure at the hedge and the walk and the white door with its quaint knocker.

"Wait until you see the inside," replied Nyoda, throwing open the door with the pleased air of a child exhibiting a new and cherished toy.

Cries of admiration and delight filled the air as the Winnebagos entered. The whole house was furnished just as it might have been in the old Colonial days---braided rugs on the floor, candlesticks in glass holders, slender-legged, spindle-backed chairs, quaint mahogany tables, a huge spinning wheel before the fireplace, and, wonder of wonders! between the two end windows of the stately parlor there stood a harp, the late sunshine gleaming in a soft radiance from its gilded frame and slender wires like the glory of a by-gone day. Hinpoha stood enraptured before the instrument.

"I've always been wild to learn to play on a harp," she said, drawing her fingers caressingly over the strings and awaking faint, throbbing tones, too soft to be discords, that echoed through the room like the ghost of a song played years ago, and trembled away until they seemed to mingle with the golden light that flooded the room through the west windows.

"If I had my choice of being any of the fabulous creatures in the mythology book," said Hinpoha musingly, "I think I'd choose to be a harpy."

"A what?" asked Nyoda quizzically.

"A harpy," repeated Hinpoha, touching the strings again. Then, looking up and seeing the twinkle in Nyoda's eye, she added, "Weren't the Harpies beautiful maidens that sat on the rocks and played harps and lured the sailors to destruction with their ravishing songs? Oh, I say, they were too," she finished feebly, amid a perfect shout of laughter from the girls. "Well, what *were* they, then? Horrible monsters? Oh, what a shame! What a misleading thing the English language is, anyway! You'd naturally expect a harpy to play on a harp. Anyway, you needn't laugh, Sahwah. I

remember once you said in class that a peptonoid was a person with a lot of pep, so there!"

Sahwah joined gaily in the laugh that followed at her expense. "So I did," she admitted unblushingly, "and what's more, I only discovered day before yesterday that a trapezoid wasn't a trapeze performer!"

"Oh, Sahwah, you imp, you're making that up," said Gladys in a skeptical tone.

"Nice child," said Nyoda, patting Sahwah approvingly, trying to turn the laugh upon herself, on the principle that the hostess should always break another cut glass tumbler when the guest breaks one."

"Oh dear," said Migwan regretfully, "why did you say that about Harpies, Hinpoha, and make us laugh? I was just thinking how beautiful you looked, leaning over that harp, just like that oil painting in the gallery at home, and was getting into quite a poetical mood over it, when you had to make us laugh and spoil it all. I declare, that was too bad!"

"Serves you right for getting poetical about me," retorted Hinpoha.

"But Nyoda," said Gladys, whose eyes had been feasting on the details of the house with every increasing wonder and pleasure, "how does it come that you moved into this little town from Philadelphia, and how do you happen to be living in this wonderful old house?"

"I inherited this place a few months after I was married," replied Nyoda. "It is the old Carver House; built before the Revolution and kept in the family ever since. My mother was a Carver---that's how I happened to inherit it. She died years ago, without ever dreaming that the house would come to me, for she was not a direct heir, being only a third cousin. But the last of the direct line died out with old Uncle Jasper Carver and that left me the only living blood relation. So this beautiful house and everything in it came to me."

"Oh, Nyoda, I should think you would have died of joy!" said Hinpoha in a rapt tone. "I know people who would give their eyebrows to own so much old Colonial furniture."

"This house has seen proud days in its time," went on Nyoda. "The Carvers were staunch patriots, and many a meeting of loyal citizens was held around that table in the dining room. They say that Benjamin Franklin was once a guest here. The history of the Carver family was Uncle Jasper's pet hobby, and he has it all printed up in books which you may see in the library.

"The Carvers have always been a fighting family," she continued, with a flash of pride in her black eyes. "They fought in the Revolution, in the Civil War, and in the Spanish-American War. But now that the country is again calling men to her aid," she finished with a sigh, "there are no more Carver men to answer the call. I am the last of the Carvers, and I am only a woman."

"But you've done all that you *could* do," said Migwan staunchly. "You've sent your husband."

Nyoda drew herself up unconsciously as her eyes sought the picture of Sherry on the mantelpiece with the silk flag draped over it.

"Yes," she echoed softly, "the last of the Carvers has done her bit."

A dinner bell clanged through the house and Nyoda sprang up with a start. "Dinner will be ready in fifteen minutes, girls," she exclaimed. "Scurry upstairs and remove the stains of travel while I consult the cook."

"Why, Nyoda," said Sahwah in surprise, "I didn't know you had a cook. You told us coming up from the station that you did all your own work because you didn't think it was patriotic to hire servants at this time and take them away from the more essential industries!"

Nyoda looked nonplussed for a moment and then she laughed heartily. "Special occasion," she remarked ceremoniously, and disappeared with a chuckle through a door at the end of the hall.

The four girls went leisurely up the broad staircase with its white spindles and polished mahogany rail to the rooms overhead, furnished with huge curtained four-posters and fascinating chests of drawers with cut-glass knobs.

In fifteen minutes the bell sent its summons through the house again and the Winnebagos responded with alacrity. Nyoda stood in the dining-room doorway to receive them, looking rather mysterious, they thought, and Sahwah's sharp eyes counted a sixth place laid at the table. Nyoda seated them, apparently not noticing the empty place, and then tinkled the little bell that stood on the table at her place. In answer to her tinkle the pantry door opened and in came the cook carrying a tray of dishes. The Winnebagos looked up idly as she came in and the next moment the ancestral Chippendale chairs of the Carver family were shoved back unceremoniously as their occupants joined in a mad scramble to see who could reach the cook first, while Nyoda looked on and laughed gleefully.

"Veronica! Veronica Lehar!" cried the Winnebagos in wonder and ecstasy. "*You* here!" "How perfectly gorgeous!" "How did you happen to come?"

"By urgent invitation, sweet lambs," replied Nyoda, "just like some other people I could name. She blazed the trail for the Winnebagos by arriving yesterday."

"Oh, you naughty, bad 'Bagos," said Migwan, embracing both Veronica and Nyoda in her delight, "to frame up such a surprise for us! We standing there cool as cucumbers in the front room of the house talking for half an hour and Veronica out in the kitchen all the while, masquerading as cook!"

"You pretty nearly upset the surprise, though, Mistress Sahwah," said Nyoda, "with your suspicions in regard to my having a cook. It's next to impossible to take you in, you eagle-eyed Indian! Come, Veronica, roll down your sleeves and take your rightful place at the table. Now, girls,

"While we're here let's give a cheer
And sing to Wohelo!"

And then let's dip our wheatless crusts into our meatless broth for the eternal glory and prosperity of the Winnebagos!"

CHAPTER IV

VERONICA

Dinner over, the Winnebagos fell upon the dishes like a swarm of bees and had them cleared up and washed in a twinkling. Then they gathered in the long parlor where the harp stood, and to please them Nyoda turned off the electric lights and lit the candles in their old-fashioned holders. The little twinkling lights multiplied themselves in the mirrors until it seemed as if there were myriads of them; grotesque six-fold shadows danced on the walls as the girls moved about; the gilded harp gleamed softly in the mellow light and an atmosphere of by-gone days hovered over the room. It was an ideal moment for confidences, for heart-to-heart talks, and they spoke of many things which were sacred to one another, little intimate echoes of the days when they first learned to work and play together.

"Don't you remember, Veronica," said Migwan, "when you became a Winnebago you took the gull for your symbol, because it flew over the ocean and you wanted to follow it home?"

A memory of that day came back to the girls, of Veronica's bitter homesickness, and how desperately sorry they had been for her, and yet how helpless they had felt before her aristocratic mien. There was a great difference in her now, all the more noticeable because they had not seen her for a year. She was thinner and her eyes were larger and more pansylike than ever, but she was much more talkative and animated than she used to be. Very little of the old superior bearing remained, and the looks that she bent upon Nyoda were those of an humble and adoring slave. Proof positive of the change that had taken place in her was the prank she had played upon them that night in masquerading as the cook---she who had once refused to help prepare one of the famous suppers in the House of the Open Door, disdainfully remarking that cooking was work for servants, not for ladies.

At Migwan's remark Veronica stirred restlessly and made an emphatic gesture with her hand as she replied firmly, "That was all nonsense. I gave up the gull as a symbol long ago. It had such a screaming, ugly cry instead of a song. If I am to be one of the Song Friends I must have a song bird for a symbol. I have changed to the red winged blackbird, because that was the first American bird I learned to know by his song, outside of the robin. His voice always sounded so gay and free, singing over the open fields, that he seemed to be a symbol of the freedom and happiness which one finds in America. When he sings 'O-ka-lee! O-ka-lee! O-ka-lee!' I always think he is singing 'Liberty! Liberty! Liberty!'"

The four Winnebagos exchanged glances as Veronica uttered this sentiment, recalling their discussion of her in the train.

"Would you like to go back to Hungary?" asked Hinpoha.

Veronica shook her head vehemently. "I would not go back to my old home now if I could. I know now that I could never be happy there after having tasted the freedom of America."

"But you were not one of the oppressed poor," said Hinpoha. "You belonged to the upper class, didn't you?"

"It is true, we were not poor," answered Veronica, "we were not oppressed like the peasants. We did the oppressing ourselves, and because people in our station had done the same thing for hundreds of years we never stopped to think that it was wrong. The people in the village used to bow and scrape when they met us on the street, but how much they really cared for us I'd hate to say. It wasn't the way people greet each other in the streets here. Just imagine Sahwah, for instance, going down the street and meeting Hinpoha and having to bow humbly and wait until Hinpoha spoke to her first before she could say anything!"

The Winnebagos shrieked with laughter at the picture thus conjured up.

"Over here it seems too funny for anything," went on Veronica, "but that's the sort of thing I've been used to all my life. Now I see how ridiculous it all was and how wicked, and it seems almost like a judgment that our estate was destroyed in the very first month of the war and we had to suffer such great hardships. There was no bowing and scraping to us in that flight into the mountains, I can tell you. It was everyone for himself then, and we were all in the same boat." Veronica closed her eyes for a moment and shuddered involuntarily as the horror of that remembered flight overcame her; she threw it off with an effort and presently proceeded in an entirely composed tone. The Winnebagos, looking on with sympathetic understanding, marveled at her perfect poise and great power of self-control.

"It may seem strange to you girls," went on Veronica, "you who are so patriotic about this American land of yours, that I should talk this way about the land of my birth, and maybe you will despise me. But since I have been in America and have learned that people can live together in a much sweeter, fairer, truer way than I ever dreamed of, I could never go

back to the old way. I want to become an American and never wish to leave this country. I don't want to be called a Hungarian. I want to be an American girl like the rest of you. Oh, I think you are the most wonderful girls in the world!"

She paused to squeeze Sahwah's hand, which rested on the arm of her chair.

"My uncle feels the same way about it as I do," continued Sahwah. "He became an American citizen ten years ago and is much more proud of his American citizenship than he ever was of his title."

"Did your uncle have a title?" asked Hinpoha breathlessly.

"It was a sort of courtesy title," answered Veronica, "because he was the youngest son of the baron, my grandfather, but, of course, he belonged in the family, which put him in the same class with the nobility."

"Was your grandfather a baron?" asked Hinpoha incredulously.

Veronica nodded casually and went on talking about her uncle.

"My uncle ran away at the time he became of military age rather than go into the army. All he cared for was music. Of course there was quite a stir about it and he changed his name and took his grandmother's maiden name, which was Lehar. He has now adopted that name legally in this country, and is plain 'Mr. Lehar.'"

"Then isn't *your* name Lehar either?" asked Hinpoha, while a rustle of surprise went through the group.

"No," replied Veronica in a perfectly matter-of-fact voice, "I simply assumed that name at his suggestion. You see, as long as I intended to be an American, I wouldn't have any further use for *my* title either-----"

"Oh-h-h-h!" exclaimed the Winnebagos in a long breath of astonishment. "*Your* title! Have you got one, too?"

Veronica looked around with a little look of wonder at the sensation she had created. "I *did* have," she corrected gently. "I haven't it any more. I left it behind me in Hungary. I'm just plain Veronica Lehar now."

She looked into the girls' faces with a half-questioning, half-pleading expression as if fearful that this confession of her possession of a title would raise a barrier between them.

"What was your title?" asked Hinpoha, leaning forward in her chair and immensely impressed.

"My father was the Baron Szathmar-Vasarhely," replied Veronica. "I was what would be called in English Lady Veronica Szathmar-Vasarhely."

"Lady---what?" asked Hinpoha in comical bewilderment.

Veronica laughed.

"Do you wonder why I changed my name when I came to America and took the simple, sensible name of Lehar? Imagine going to school here under the name of Veronica Szathmar-Vasarhely! You can just hear the teachers pronouncing it, can't you? Why, I'd never have any friends at all, because people would rather avoid me than attempt to introduce me to anybody! Besides, it's extravagant to have such a name, it takes so much ink to sign it! Lehar is ever so

much more convenient. You can't tell how light and airy I feel since I threw away that long name!"

"But Veronica, why didn't you tell us before about this?" asked Hinpoha. "We never *dreamed* your name had ever been anything else but Lehar!"

"Because I was afraid you wouldn't take me into your group and treat me as one of yourselves," said Veronica simply. "I did so want to be an American like the rest of you. I was afraid you might object to having a title in your midst. But now you really love me and won't let it make any difference?" she pleaded wistfully.

"Of course not, you goose," said Sahwah emphatically. "We love you for yourself and it wouldn't make any difference to us if you had a title as long as a kite tail! Now do you believe it?" and she bestowed a convincing hug on Veronica that nearly took her breath away.

"But Veronica," said Nyoda, both amused and perplexed, "is it possible to throw away a title like that? If you were born Lady Veronica Szathmar-Vasarhely can you deliberately say you 'won't be it'? I thought titles either had to be kept or formally transferred to someone else. Until this is done you are still the rightful owner of the title under the law of your country and no one else can claim it."

"They can't make me go back, can they?" cried Veronica, starting up in alarm.

"Why, no," replied Nyoda reassuringly, "and I suppose if you want to give up your claim to the title nobody will stop you. I was simply amused at the way you announced that you had 'thrown away' your title and proposed to have nothing further to do with it."

"I won't go back!" declared Veronica with kindling eyes, springing to her feet and clenching her little fists. "I won't! I won't! I'm going to be an American, so there! I won't be a baroness!" Her great black eyes flashed lightnings at the girls, who looked at her in consternation. Veronica, in a passion, was something to strike awe into the breast of the beholder.

"There aren't any estates left, thank goodness!" she declared. "They were all destroyed in the shelling of the town. For all they know over there, I'm dead, too, killed along with dozens of others. How do they know that I escaped on horseback to the Carpathian Mountains and with other refugees traveled across Roumania to the Black Sea and finally found friends who sent me to my uncle in America? Nobody will ever know where all the people of our village went to. Many of them perished in the mountains, many are in other countries. How do they know but what I perished, too? How will they ever know that I am here in America when I go by the name of Lehar? Besides, who would ever take the trouble to look for me when our estates have been swept away by the Russians? I *will* be an American!" she finished stormily, and stood looking defiantly at the girls, her head thrown back, her breast heaving, her whole body quivering with passion.

Hinpoha broke up the tension with her usual chatter. "Tell us about some of the people you knew in Hungary, I mean important ones," she asked curiously. Her romantic imagination saw Veronica hob-nobbing with royalty and surrounded by splendors. "Did you ever see a real prince?" she asked in a hushed tone.

"Lots of times," replied Veronica in a matter-of-fact way. "I have often seen royalty riding through the streets in Budapest and Debreczin. Everybody bows while the royal carriage is passing, but I don't believe many people fall in love with princes at first sight! They're hardly ever handsome, not at all like the princes in the fairy tales. They're generally fat and stupid looking."

"I have met and talked to two princes, both occasions being when I had played at a private musicale at the home of Countess Mariska Esterhazy in Budapest, where I studied in the Conservatory."

There was a curious silence among the Winnebagos at these words, which fell so lightly, so conversationally from Veronica's lips. It suddenly seemed to them that although they had known her two years they really did not know her at all! How carelessly she spoke of playing in the home of a countess! And of meeting royalty!

"Did you really play before the king?" asked Hinpoha in an awestricken whisper.

Veronica laughed, a jolly, chummy laugh that swept away their momentary feeling of constraint and made her one of themselves again. "Gracious, no!" she replied, highly amused. "I never could play well enough for that! The Countess Mariska was quite a democratic person, and had a great many pupils from the Conservatory as her proteges. Anybody who could play at all stood a good chance of playing at one of her musicales; you didn't need to be a genius at all."

Sahwah's eyes narrowed ever so slightly. Although she could play no musical instrument herself and knew less about music than any of the others, she realized, probably better than all the rest, the quality of Veronica's performance on the violin. Sahwah had a mysterious inner perception which made her sense things without knowing why or how. So she knew, although Veronica modestly laid no claim to distinction, that she must have won fame and favor by her playing to a much greater extent than she had ever divulged.

"Tell us about the princes you met," said Hinpoha eagerly, and the Winnebagos leaned forward in an expectant circle.

Veronica's eyes danced as though at some amusing recollection.

"The first prince I ever met," she began, dropping down on the floor beside the spinning wheel in the corner and leaning her head against it, "was Prince Ferdinand of Negol, which is one of the small Eastern provinces of Hungary. He was an old man, seventy years of age, and he had both the gout and the asthma. He sat with one foot on a cushion on a footstool and when it hurt him he made the awfulest faces. Not a bit like a story book prince, Hinpoha. He was at the Countess Mariska's one afternoon when I played and when I was through he requested that I be presented to him."

"Oh-h-h-h-h!" exclaimed Hinpoha under her breath in a thrilled tone.

"The Countess presented me," went on Veronica, "and the prince conversed with me for a few minutes in a wheezy voice. He didn't say anything wonderful, just remarked that I was a good child and had played well and should make the most of my opportunities, and so on. Then his foot gave him a twinge and he made a dreadful face, and the Countess took me by the arm and marched me away."

Veronica laughed at the recollection, and the Winnebagos laughed, too, at the picture of the gouty old prince wheezing out paternal advice to the lively Veronica.

"Go on, tell us about the other one," said Hinpoha, plainly disappointed that royalty had turned out to be so ordinary.

"The other one was a German prince," said Veronica, and then laughingly added, "I don't suppose you care to hear about *him*?"

"Oh, come on, tell us about him," coaxed the Winnebagos.

"He was Prince Karl Augustus of Hohenburg," replied Veronica. "He was traveling in Hungary for his health, or rather, for his wife's, and he came to one of the Countess's musicales. He wasn't an ideal prince, either, although he was quite young. He was fat and red-faced and had little beady eyes that made you nervous when he looked at you. After the musicale was over Countess Mariska came to me in a great state of satisfaction and informed me that the prince had enjoyed one piece that I had played so much that he desired me to play it for his wife, who was ill in the hotel. The Countess packed me into her carriage and drove over to the hotel where the prince was staying informally, giving me minute instructions all the way over as to my conduct while there. I played for the princess, who was a thin, melancholy looking woman, and she seemed to enjoy it and thanked me quite graciously. A day or two afterward I received a package by messenger, and it was this little finger ring, a present from the prince and princess. I didn't like the prince, but the ring was very pretty and I have kept it, because the princess probably picked it out and it gave her pleasure to do so. His wife was a Hungarian."

She stretched out her hand to the Winnebagos, who crowded eagerly around to examine the small but brilliantly glowing ruby set in a dainty gold band. They had seen it hundreds of times before, but had never guessed it was the gift of a prince. Truly, Veronica was full of surprises!

"It seems to me, Veronica," said Nyoda, "that you were quite an honored little person in your country, and must have been greatly envied by your friends. How does it come that you are willing to throw away the precedence which you formerly enjoyed on account of your rank and station to become a plain citizen of another country where you have to carve out your place single handed? Don't you really ever have any regrets over it?"

Veronica shook her head resolutely. "Not at all," she replied in a firm voice. "After once living in America I could never long to go back to the old life. Since I have become a Camp Fire Girl I have learned that the true nobility is not of birth but of worth, and there should be no other in any country. I promised, you know, when I became a Fire Maker, to tend

'The fire that is called the love of man for man,'

and one cannot do that and live luxuriously on money that one has wrung from the poor instead of earning honestly. No, thank you, I would rather be a democratic American girl and call everyone friend! It's lots more fun, even than being the protege of a countess! I'd rather be a Torch Bearer than a princess!"

Veronica's eyes shone with sincerity and fervor, and the Winnebagos were tremendously impressed.

"Of course you're going to be an American," said Sahwah, drawing Veronica to her feet and encircling her with her arm, "and you're going to be just as honored and distinguished here as you were over there, because you're so wonderful that people can't help making a fuss over you. You're going to become the most wonderful violinist in the country, and people are going to go just wild over you!"

Sahwah would have poured out more brilliant prophecies, but she was cut short by the sound of a great disturbance without. There was a violent clatter on the brick walk outside, followed by a crashing thump, which was accompanied by the sound of splintering wood.

The Winnebagos started and looked at each other apprehensively. Nyoda sprang to her feet and ran for the door.

"The Kaiser is out!" she exclaimed, and seizing an umbrella from the rack in the hall, she disappeared into outer darkness.

CHAPTER V

ENTER THE KAISER

The Winnebagos streamed out after her, and in the moonlight they could see her running around the side of the house, brandishing the umbrella at a large white goat which was prancing before her on his hind legs. Sahwah picked up a good-sized stone from the driveway and rushed to Nyoda's side, ready to hurl it at the creature, under the impression that Nyoda was on the verge of being killed, but at that instant Nyoda suddenly opened the umbrella and the rampant Capricorn dropped to all fours and fled hastily in the direction of the stable.

Nyoda, flushed and laughing, returned to the girls, who were picking up the broken pieces of the white wooden trellis which had supported the rose vine over the front door. "Is there anything left?" she inquired, ruefully regarding the heap of kindling wood to which the slender laths had been reduced by the battering ram force of the Kaiser's onslaught.

"What was it?" asked Migwan, peering fearfully into the shadows behind the house. Migwan had not caught a clear glimpse of the creature and was still uncertain whether the house had been bombed or a wild elephant had broken loose.

"That," announced Nyoda in a tone both humorous and tragic, and flinging out her hands in a helpless gesture, "is Bill the Kaiser."

"What is he, a rhinoceros?" asked Migwan.

"Would that he were!" exclaimed Nyoda fervently. "A rhinoceros, a wild rhinoceros, with an ivory toothpick on his nose, would be a simple problem compared to Kaiser Bill. No, my dears, Kaiser Bill is a goat, a William goat, with the disposition of a crab, the soul of a monkey and the constitution of a battle tank. We named him Kaiser Bill for reasons too numerous to mention. His diet is varied and fearful, and his motto, like Lord Nelson's, is 'a little more grape.' He ate the whole grape vine, roots, tendrils and all, and then he ate the grape arbor for good measure. He has also consumed two hammocks, a tennis racket and the tar paper roof of the auto shed. He is fond of launching offensives, and his favorite method of warfare is a sudden attack from the rear. He is bomb proof, bullet proof and gas proof, and the only thing in the universe he is afraid of is an open umbrella. Not a few worthy members of this stately community have gained the impression that I am not quite right mentally, because I never go abroad in the street without an umbrella, never knowing at what moment that goat is going to escape from the confines of the stable yard, follow my trail, and come charging down upon me.

"One day I was sure he was out, and was walking along the street carrying my umbrella open, ready for instant emergency, when I met Mr. Carrington, the frigid rector of St. John's, the church to which all the leading families in Oakwood belong. It was a perfect day, not a cloud in the sky, nor was the sun so hot that protection from it was necessary. Mr. Carrington asked, 'Why the umbrella?' and I replied, 'Oh, I always carry that, because I'm afraid I might meet the Kaiser!' Whereupon he looked at me severely and walked off abruptly, and it didn't occur to me until later that he didn't know who the Kaiser was, and how absolutely idiotic my answer must have sounded."

"Oh, Nyoda, how screamingly funny!" cried the Winnebagos, laughing until they cried.

"But why do you keep the goat if he is such a nuisance?" asked Gladys wonderingly.

"I can't help myself," replied Nyoda with another tragic gesture. "I inherited him along with the house, and like the crown jewels, while I am to have full enjoyment of possession during lifetime, I can't dispose of him."

"How queer!" said Sahwah. "I never heard of a will like that! What a strange man your uncle must have been!"

"Oh, Uncle Jasper had nothing whatever to do with it," replied Nyoda. "He never even mentioned the Kaiser in his will."

"Then why can't you get rid of him?" asked Sahwah, mystified.

"Because it would break old Hercules' heart," answered Nyoda. "Hercules was Uncle Jasper's coachman all his life and grew old and white-haired in his service. When Uncle Jasper died he provided in his will that Hercules was to be retired on full wages and to continue living in the room over the stable that had been his home for fifty years. Hercules owned this goat, which he had brought up 'by hand,' and it was the delight of his heart. He begged me with tears in his eyes to let him keep it, so what could I do but give them both my blessing and submit meekly to the outrages of the beast? My poor rose vine!" she finished ruefully, looking at the torn twigs and branches which lay on the ground in the ruins of the trellis.

Then she suddenly threw back her head and laughed loud and long. "I was born under the sign of Capricornus, the Goat," she said, overcome with amusement. "It's sheer fatality that I should be tied up to the Kaiser. Who shall dispute the will of the gods?"

"Come, Veronica, give us some music on the violin before we go to bed."

They returned to the long parlor where the mellow candle light shone softly on the harp and on an old-fashioned picture which hung above it. It was an oil painting, a portrait of a young girl in a short-waisted white satin dress, clasping in her hands a red rose. The face was small and vivacious, and the bright brown eyes seemed to look straight into the eyes of the girls as they stood before the picture.

"Who is the girl in the picture, Nyoda?" asked Sahwah, whose eyes had been drawn irresistibly to the portrait ever since she had been in the room.

"That is the portrait of Elizabeth Carver," replied Nyoda. "She was the daughter of Alexander Carver, the man who built this house. I was named after her. That harp was hers, likewise the bed in which you are going to sleep, Sahwah. She was a young girl at the time of the Revolution, and her father and both her brothers fought in the war, as well as the man she was to marry. There is a story about her in Uncle Jasper's history of the Carver family, how she saved her lover from the Indians. This valley was the scene of many skirmishes between the Colonial troops and the Indians, who had taken sides with the British. He had come to pay her a visit when his horse was shot under him by an Iroquois scout, and, stunned by the fall, he lay motionless on the ground, when a whole band of Iroquois, returning from the massacre of Wyoming, poured over the hilltop directly above them. Elizabeth took one look at the approaching Indians and then she lifted her Paul on to her own horse and galloped away to safety with the whole pack whooping at her heels. That is the tale of Elizabeth Carver, my namesake."

"Oh, Nyoda, how splendid!" cried Sahwah, with sparkling eyes. "Oh, dear, why can't things like that happen now? Life in America is so tame and uneventful, compared to what it used to be in the early days." And she fell to musing discontentedly upon the vast advantage of frontier life over her own humdrum, modern existence.

Then Veronica began to play on her violin, and Sahwah's discontented thoughts took wing, and she went floating out on a magic sea of music, and sat with closed eyes drinking in those wild, seraphic melodies that flowed from Veronica's enchanted bow until it seemed as if it could be no mere violin making that music, it was the Angel Israel, playing on his own heart strings. As Sahwah sat and listened there suddenly came over her a great feeling of sadness, and unrest, a sense of the vastness and seriousness of life, and she felt desperately unhappy. She had never felt so before. All her life she had been happy-go-lucky, and scatterbrained, and life had stretched out before her as one vast picnic, without a single solemn note in it. And now, while she listened to Veronica's playing she was suddenly plunged into the depths of

world sorrow! She was so sad she didn't know what to do, tears gathered in her eyes and stole down her cheeks; she didn't know what she was sad about, but she was so sorrowful that her heart was breaking!

The sound of applause brought her to herself with a start. Veronica had stopped playing, and the girls were expressing their enraptured appreciation. Sahwah's sadness left her and she applauded wildly, then sighed regretfully when Veronica put the violin back into its case and announced it was time to go to bed.

After they had gone upstairs and were preparing to retire, Hinpoha suddenly exclaimed in a dismayed tone: "My locket! It's gone!"

"Are you sure you didn't leave it at home?" asked Nyoda.

"I know I wore it," replied Hinpoha, "I remember having it on in the train. My hair caught in *it* and I had to take it off to get it loose. Then I put it on again, and I never thought of it since."

"Was it the one your mother gave you, with her picture in?" asked Migwan, sympathetically.

"No," replied Hinpoha. "It was the Roman gold one Aunt Phoebe gave me for Christmas last year and I had Sahwah's picture in it, that little head she had taken when she graduated."

Search was made through all of Hinpoha's belongings, in the hope that it might have dropped into some of her numerous frills, but it could not be found.

"I suppose I lost it in the scramble when we got out of the train," Hinpoha sighed regretfully, "and that's the end of it. Oh, dear, will I ever learn not to be so careless with my things?" And thoroughly impatient with herself, Hinpoha marched off to bed.

CHAPTER VI

A SURPRISE IN STORE FOR HILLSDALE

Sahwah stood in the long parlor under the portrait of Elizabeth Carver, gazing, with an expression of great respect, mingled with envy, up into the vivacious young face. The eyes in the picture gazed back just as intently at her, with a deep humorous twinkle lurking in their depths, and the red lips curving upwards at the corners in the promise of a smile seemed just about to speak. To Sahwah it did not seem to be a painting, a creation of oil on canvas, it was a real girl, Elizabeth Carver herself. She smiled back into the eyes that smiled at her, like two real girls who have just been introduced to each other and feel instinctively at the moment of introduction that they are going to like each other tremendously. Quite naturally, just as she would have done with a flesh-and-blood person, Sahwah began talking aloud.

"That was a wonderfully brave thing you did, saving your lover's life that way," she said admiringly. "I wish I had known you. I think we would have been good friends. We would have had no end of fun swimming together. Could you do Trudgeon, and Australian Crawl? Or couldn't you swim? Girls didn't swim as much in your day as they do now, I believe. It's because the side stroke wasn't invented then. But you could ride horseback. I haven't done much of that, I never had a horse, but I know I could ride if I had the chance. But I can paddle a canoe, standing on the gunwales---could you do that?"

Sahwah paused anxiously, as if half fearing the accomplished Colonial maid would also claim this, her most cherished attainment. But Elizabeth gave no sign that she could rival Sahwah's prowess with the canoe, and Sahwah, made affable

by the knowledge of her own powers, went on graciously, "You could play on the harp, though, and of course I can't," She laid her hand on the gilt frame of the harp that stood at her side, and looked at its wires and pedals respectfully. She did not venture to play upon it, as Hinpoha had done, somehow she didn't quite dare, with Elizabeth there looking on.

"You must have looked beautiful playing on it," resumed Sahwah in soft, musing tones. "No wonder the man named Paul fell in love with you. And to think you saved his life! I wish *I* could save a man's life. Oh, wouldn't I have had the adventures, though, if I had lived in your time!" Sahwah had unconsciously clasped her hands, and stood looking up at Elizabeth with a world of envy and longing in her eyes.

Voices in the room behind her brought her back to the present. She turned, and there was Hinpoha with two strange girls.

"Oh, Sahwah, are you alone?" said Hinpoha in surprise. "I thought some of the rest were in here with you, I was sure I heard talking here when I came in. I want you to meet Agony and Oh-Pshaw, whose father you have already met. You remember my writing to you about the Heavenly Twins, the Wings, the famous Flying Column of the class? I was just on my way to hunt them up this morning when I met them on the street. They were just on *their* way to hunt *us* up. Girls, this is our Sahwah, once named Sarah Ann Brewster, but now only Sahwah the Sunfish."

Sahwah came forward, radiating smiles, to meet the twins about whom she had heard so much, and grasped their hands with delighted cordiality.

"Agony and Oh-Pshaw!" she exclaimed. "What delicious names!"

"Oh, we have baptismal names among our goods and chattels, too," said the twin whom Sahwah held by the right hand. "They are very good names, too, in their way, even Alta and Agnes, but you're not to use them under any circumstances. You're to call us Agony and Oh-Pshaw the same as everybody does."

Sahwah started at the deep, rich tones of Agony's voice. People invariably did when they heard it for the first time. It rolled and reverberated like the lowest tones of a cathedral organ. Although low-pitched and well-modulated, it had a peculiar penetrating quality, which made it carry for a surprisingly long distance.

Gladys and Migwan, upstairs putting their room to rights, heard it and came rushing down into the parlor to fling themselves upon the Twins with loud cries of joy.

"Agony! It's been *years* since I've seen you!"

"Gladys! I simply can't get used to going *to* bed without shouting good-night through the transom to you!"

"Hinpoha, my angel of light, come to my arms once more! Come sit on my knee and tell me all your adventures since you went home from college!"

Just then Nyoda came into the room and raptures were interrupted by new introductions.

"Twins!" said Nyoda delightedly. "And just alike, too! How am I going to tell you apart?"

"Easy," said Agony brightly. "Oh-Pshaw's nose is a shade more classic than mine, while I have a more angelic expression."

"Thank you for calling those little points to my attention," said Nyoda. "Now that you mention it I see the difference clearly. I shall never mistake one of you for the other."

Nyoda's clear-seeing eye had already noted a dozen points of difference in the two girls. Both had very black hair and very blue eyes and very red lips; both had deep, vibrant voices. But Agony was more vivid than Oh-Pshaw in every way. Her hair was more brilliantly black; her eyes more sparkingly blue; her lips more glowingly carmine. The greatest point of difference was their voices. Oh-Pshaw spoke in deep, musical chest tones, but in Agony's there was an added quality of resonance, a *timbre* unlike anything she had ever heard before. Nyoda had heard a great many kinds of voices in her years in the classroom.

Also her eye detected other, subtler, differences. In Agony she read a nature impulsive, enthusiastic, brilliant, confident, fascinating; also hot-headed, strong-willed and impatient of restraint. In Oh-Pshaw she saw a less all-conquering, a more plodding nature, slower to comprehend, less ardent and with less power to influence. But if the eyes were not so sparkling they were more thoughtful, and if the red lips were set in a less bewitchingly mischievous curve there was something about their lines that told more of patience and perseverance. All this Nyoda, who was an expert judge of character, read in the faces of the two girls as she watched them with interested and friendly scrutiny.

Veronica came in and Hinpoha immediately jumped up and drew her forward with an air of great ceremony. "Girls," she said impressively, "meet Lady Veronica Szathmar---er---Lehar. She's a real baroness," she added.

Agony and Oh-Pshaw looked first at each other in astonishment, and then with eager interest at the slim, dark-eyed girl before them.

Veronica laughed and came forward simply, cordially acknowledging the introduction. Then she turned to Hinpoha. "I thought you understood my name was just Veronica Lehar," she said reproachfully.

"Of course," murmured Hinpoha, her mind on the tremendous impression her casual mention of the sonorous title had apparently made on the Twins. Then she launched into a full account of Veronica's history for their benefit.

"You are a Hungarian, are you?" Agony asked Veronica, and Nyoda noticed that she drew back and her tone had become somewhat frigid. Quickly, she flung herself into the breach, and sending Veronica out to tell Hercules that Kaiser Bill was in the geranium bed, she graphically described Veronica's passionate outbreak of a few nights before and told of her intense desire to be an American. The coldness died from Agony's expressive face as she listened and when Veronica returned she treated her with sincere cordiality. Nyoda, however, still felt disturbed about Veronica. With the intense feeling of patriotism that people naturally had they would be quite likely to look askance at Veronica when they heard that she belonged to a baronial family of Hungary and her father had been a Captain in an Austrian regiment.

"Veronica," she said seriously, "I don't know whether it's a wise thing for you to tell people about yourself with such perfect frankness. It's all right with us here, of course, because we understand your feelings, but you know at such a time as this there are always people who are on the lookout for sensations, and if it were generally known that you were a Hungarian girl with a title some people might misunderstand, and it might make you unhappy. I would avoid the subject of nationality as much as possible, and not speak so freely about your father's having been in the Austrian army."

Thus did Nyoda endeavor to shield Veronica from further coldness and looks of suspicion such as she had seen displayed by Agony directly she heard that Veronica was an alien enemy.

"I suppose it *would* be better not to tell people about it," agreed Veronica. "No one knows that my real name isn't Lehar, outside of my uncle's family, and you," said Veronica lightly. "I've never told anyone else about it."

"We haven't told anyone but Agony and Oh-Pshaw," said the Winnebagos, and promised to keep the secret inviolate.

"May I ask you also to say nothing about it?" Nyoda asked the Twins.

"Certainly we'll keep it to ourselves," replied Agony readily. "I think it's perfectly epic to have such a secret. We wouldn't divulge it for worlds, would we, Oh-Pshaw?"

Agony chatted on gaily, entertainingly, flitting from subject to subject, and the rest listened from sheer pleasure of hearing her rich voice.

"I'm *so* glad you Winnebagos have come to town," she exclaimed jubilantly, bestowing a hug on Sahwah, who stood beside her, "you've saved our lives!"

"How so?" asked Sahwah curiously.

"With your help we can do it," continued Agony.

"Do what?" asked Sahwah.

"Beat Hillsdale," replied Agony. "Hillsdale is the next largest town to Oakwood in the county and they're trying their best to outdo us in every way. They've done it, too, in most respects. Their prep school has beaten our academy both in football and basketball for the last five years; their city baseball team beat ours every time they played; they got ahead of us in the number of men who enlisted in the army, and they outdid us in the Liberty Loan. There's nothing but rivalry all through everything. Oakwood is just wild to get ahead of Hillsdale in something. Now there's going to be a great exhibition military drill for girls held in Philadelphia the last week in August and each county is to send its prize drill company. So far Hillsdale is the only town in our county who has a company of girls drilling, and they're cocksure of getting to Philadelphia to enter the big contest. Oakwood girls haven't got the courage to get up a company. They say they'll only be beaten out by Hillsdale anyway, so what's the use? But now that you're here it'll be different. With you to start a company and carry it along we'll beat Hillsdale and her old Girl Scouts to a frazzle, I know we can. I'm so tired of hearing those Hillsdale Girl Scouts raved about. Everybody thinks they're perfectly wonderful and their own personal opinion is that there never was anything created quite as marvelous as they. Just wait until we beat them out in the drill contest! You'll get up a company of the girls here, won't you?" she pleaded eagerly. "I can get somebody to drill us if you do."

"We will!" answered the Winnebagos enthusiastically, their sporting blood immediately aroused. When did the Winnebagos ever let a challenge of their supremacy go unanswered?

"Oh, goody!" cried Agony. "I knew you'd do it! Oh, poor Hillsdale! Poor, poor Hillsdale!" Agony, jubilant, waved her parasol around her head wildly. "Come to dinner Friday night," she said, "and we'll work out the details. That is the last night father is to be home. There's another guest coming, an artist who has just come to town. Father met him on the train and is quite taken with him. What do you think of my father?" she wound up.

"He's very grand looking, but jolly, too," said Sahwah.

"Lots of people are afraid of father," Agony chatted on. "He's Assistant District Attorney in Philadelphia, you know. He is always gentle with us, but he can be very stern with people when he wants to. They say that prisoners always quail before him in the court room and that witnesses dread to be cross-examined by him. He has a way of piercing people through with his eyes that makes them lose their nerve and they always confess. He's been merciless in his prosecution

of slackers and draft evaders and has made himself quite famous. There was an article about him in one of the Sunday papers recently."

"Oh!" murmured the Winnebagos, quite impressed.

The big grandfather clock on the stairs chimed eleven and the Twins jumped up hastily. "We've got to go this minute!" exclaimed Agony. "Grandmother is not at home this morning and I left a kettleful of peas boiling on the stove. They're probably burned to cinders by this time!"

Evidently the fate of the peas did not weigh very heavily on Agony's conscience, for she made her adieux leisurely, and paused frequently to look about her admiringly.

This was the first time she had ever been inside of the historical old Carver House, although she had seen it many times from the outside. Uncle Jasper Carver had not been a man of sociable habits, and but few of the townspeople ever came to see him. Agony and Oh-Pshaw had only lived in Oakwood for the past four years, having been born in Philadelphia and spending their early school days there. At the death of their mother, four years before, they had come to live with their grandmother in Oakwood.

The Carver house, viewed from the outside, had been a source of much curiosity and speculation when the twins, in their rambles about Oakwood in the long warm summer evenings, would walk past and stop to admire the stately old mansion set in its old-fashioned garden, and many were the schemes they talked over for gaining admittance and seeing it on the inside.

And now, out of a clear sky, their beloved friends, the Winnebagos, were in full possession of the house of their dreams, and here *they* were, free to enter as often as they chose! Dreams certainly had a delightful way of coming true, if you only waited long enough!

CHAPTER VII

IN THE MOONLIGHT

The Wing home was an old-fashioned mansion also, and though not nearly so old or so interesting as Carver House, being very modernly furnished, it still had that unmistakable atmosphere of a house that has sheltered one of the "first families" of a town for three generations. It was also of brick, and covered almost entirely by a creeping vine; its wide verandas were embowered in clematis and honeysuckle, its smooth, velvety lawn was shaded by giant elms.

Agony's grandmother was a sprightly, up-to-date old lady, as witty and wide awake as her son, and she fairly amazed the girls by her knowledge of men and affairs and by her shrewd comments on present day happenings. And she was just as much interested in the affairs of the Winnebagos as she was in the affairs of state which interested Mr. Wing, laughed heartily at the tales of their adventures and pranks and declared to Nyoda that she envied her from the bottom of her heart because she was their Guardian.

Mr. Wing too took a lively interest in the girls and drew them out in conversation, listening respectfully to their remarks and often nodding approval of their ideas.

Mr. Prince, the artist, was there too; he and Mr. Wing were like old friends already. He had come to Oakwood to make a series of sketches of the hills and the river for a certain outdoor-life magazine; he had taken quarters in the drowsy hotel, where he found life very dull, and he was very happy to have met Mr. Wing and the Winnebagos. He hoped they would

let him accompany them on some of their hikes through the woods. The Winnebagos were charmed and agreed they had never met such a delightful man. They couldn't agree as to whether he was young or old and finally came to the decision that he was middle-aged, for to eighteen anything above thirty is middle-aged. Eugene Prince was thirty-five.

As the dinner progressed Nyoda noticed that Mr. Wing often looked long and keenly at Veronica, and she wondered just what was in his mind. Veronica's looks, her accent and her expressions set her conspicuously apart from the other girls. She also noticed that Mr. Prince was watching Veronica closely. Mr. Wing's curiosity concerning her was plainly written on his face, and finally he asked, "You are not an American, are you?"

"Indeed I am!" replied Veronica emphatically.

Mr. Wing looked surprised. "But you were not born in America?" he amended.

"No," replied Veronica with a sigh. "I was born in Hungary. But," she added brightly, "I'm here *now*, and that's enough. My uncle is an American citizen, and I'm going to be one when the war is over, but I'm an American girl already. I won't be more of one when I'm a real citizen than I am now."

Mr. Wing smiled at her ardor and remarked, "I wish everybody who came to these shores from other countries was as anxious to be a real American as you are."

Sahwah happened to be looking at Mr. Prince while Veronica was speaking and it seemed to her that he smiled very skeptically at her words. "He doesn't believe her!" said Sahwah hotly to herself and filled up with angry resentment at him as he continued to watch Veronica narrowly.

The conversation passed on to other subjects and Nyoda breathed an inward sigh of relief. It always made her uneasy when people began to wonder about Veronica.

Agony was talking animatedly about the coming drill contest and Mr. Wing was listening with smiling approval. "Good for you!" he exclaimed to the Winnebagos. "So the honor of Oakwood is to be vindicated at last! Camp Fire Girls to the rescue! Hurrah! I tell you, girls," he said enthusiastically, "if you can put it over and beat Hillsdale I'll give you each----" Here he paused and cast about in his mind for a suitable reward for such a distinguished service---"I'll give you each---no, I'll take you all on a trip to Washington, and personally conduct you into all the places where you never could get in by yourselves!"

"Oh!" shrieked Agony and Oh-Pshaw simultaneously, and "Oh!" echoed the Winnebagos in rapture.

"Sing a cheer to Mr. Wing!" cried Sahwah, and the others complied with a vigor that made the dishes ring:

"You're the B-E-S-T, best,
Of all the R-E-S-T, rest,
Oh, I love you, I love you all the T-I-M-E, time!
If you'll be M-I-N-E, mine,
I'll be T-H-I-N-E, thine,
Oh, I love you, I love you all the T-I-M-E, time!"

Mr. Wing bowed in acknowledgment of the cheer and his smile showed how much it had pleased him.

"Great time you'll have drilling, with those heels of yours," he said teasingly. "I wish I could be there to see."

"Father!" exclaimed Agony reproachfully, "do you think for a minute we'd do military drill with these shoes on?"

"But, Father," said Oh-Pshaw eagerly, "don't you really wish you *could* be there to see? I wish you could stay home awhile and play with us as you used to. Can't you? Do you *have* to go back to Philadelphia?"

Mr. Wing looked a little wistful, but he answered chafingly, "Wouldn't that be a great thing to do just now in the middle of one of the greatest cases in my career?"

"Oh, tell us about it," cried Agony eagerly. Agony was perfectly well aware of the fact that her father would never tell anything at home that was not also given out to the newspapers, but she liked to hear him tell that little in his own way.

"It's the Arnold Atterbury case,---you've read about it in the newspapers---the man who has been organizing strikes in the big munition plants," replied Mr. Wing. "We know he was only a tool in the hands of some powerful German agency, but who or what it is we do not know. But we mean to find out!" he added in a tone which gave a hint of the stern determination of his character. "We will track down those enemy influences like foxes to their holes!" His voice thundered out like the voice of judgment.

"Amen to that!" exclaimed the artist fervently, and, seizing his water glass from beside his plate, he sprang to his feet and raised it high in the air.

"Let's have a toast!" he cried. "Drink success to our cause and defeat to the enemy!"

The rest were on their feet in an instant, clinking Grandmother Wing's etched tumblers across the table and drinking the toast with all their hearts. That little incident put patriotic fervor into all of them and the evening was filled with animated discussions and hearty singing of war songs.

Migwan declared on the way home that Mr. Wing was the most charming man she had ever met. Hinpoha thought the artist was even more charming and hoped they would meet him often. Sahwah said nothing. She could not forget that the artist had seemed to doubt Veronica's sincerity, and it made her angry and she refused to acknowledge his fascinations. She walked close beside Veronica and linked arms with her as she walked.

Sahwah's feelings toward Veronica were crystallizing daily into a deep affection. In the old days she had not been moved by any great feeling of affection for her; she pitied her along with the rest and enjoyed her society after a fashion, but she stood not a little in awe of her mercurial temperament and her aristocratic ways, and much preferred the friendship of the simple, dispassionate Winnebagos. But now that she and Veronica had met after a year's separation, Sahwah suddenly realized that the dark-eyed, temperamental little Hungarian girl had an irresistible fascination for her; that her heart had gone out to her completely. Sahwah was by nature cool and unemotional, and not given to those sudden flares of friendship with which so many girls are constantly being consumed, which burn brilliantly for a short season and then go out of their own accord; it usually took a long time to kindle a friendship with her. Sahwah herself could not understand her sudden, fierce, almost motherly love for Veronica. It had not been of gradual growth like her other friendships; it had been born all in an instant that first night of her arrival at Carver House, when Veronica had played and through Sahwah's heart there had gone a strange thrill of sadness, a yearning for something which she could not understand.

From that time on Sahwah could hardly bear to have Veronica out of her sight; she wanted to be with her all day long; she was filled with a desire to protect her, to mother her, to caress her, to make her great dark eyes light with laughter, to go off alone with her, to discuss with her in private confidences the momentous affairs of girlhood.

Sahwah's soul was being strangely stirred in many ways these last few days. A queer restlessness had taken possession of her, totally foreign to her old tranquil, composed state of mind. Unexplainedly she found herself growing moody and dreamy; at times she had a curious feeling of having just experienced something, but what it was she could not remember; her mind went groping in its subconscious self for something which constantly eluded it, her heart---

"Went crooning a low song it could not learn,
But wandered over it, as one who gropes
For a forgotten chord upon a lyre."

At times she was filled with a great sadness, a poignant world-sorrow; at times with an indescribable exaltation, a longing to burst forth into triumphant song and tell the whole world of her gladness. Without knowing why or wherefore, she was vaguely conscious that in some way she was different from what she was before she came to Carver House, and she also knew that things would never be just as they were before. Somehow or other the focus had changed, a corner had been turned.

Equally unexplainable was the way in which these strange moods, these dim flashes, were subtly bound up with Veronica. It was Veronica that seemed to inspire these feelings, and similarly, it was these feelings that seemed to draw her to Veronica. Sahwah had never bothered her head about Destiny, that strange power that moves us about at will, like chessmen, and who, laying her hand upon us, makes our ways cross and intertwine themselves to work out her purposes; she only knew that in some way she was changing, and that her heart had gone out in a great flood of affection for Veronica Lehar.

Her very dreams, too, were filled with this strange new unrest, and she was continually wakeful at night---she who in former days fell asleep the instant her head touched the pillow, and enjoyed eight hours' dreamless slumber as regularly as clock-work.

It was the same again to-night. After several hours of fitful dreaming, Sahwah wakened, and in her half-consciousness there lingered an impression of eyes staring intently at her and a dream of being back in the railway train on the way to Nyoda's. The spell of the dream left her and she lay awake a long time, unaccountably happy, mysteriously sad, and with no desire to sleep.

Through the wide open window the moon poured in the fullness of its late glory and by and by Sahwah slipped from her bed and went over to the window, and, leaning her arms on the sill, sat looking out on the magic world. Below her the garden lay bathed in silver, with intense velvety black shadows, with only the faintest sigh of a breeze stirring the leaves. Far across in the valley she could see the roofs of the town shining white in the moonlight, and they seemed to be part of a magic city in which she now dwelt, far more real than the daytime town of familiar things. For a long time she leaned out over the sill, rapt and dreaming, unconscious of time, forgetful of the companions of her days, intoxicated by the moonlight until her blood raced madly through her veins and she was filled with an intense desire to go out and dance in the garden and flit in and out among the trees like a moon sprite.

Then, without warning, the strange, whimsical mood passed, and Sahwah was her old self again, the old alert, wide-awake self of former days, staring with concentrated attention at a figure which was moving rapidly through the garden. It had come from around the side of the house and was going toward the stable. Fully wide awake, Sahwah leaned farther over the sill and watched. The figure emerged from the great shadows of the elm trees into the glaring moonlight. With a start of surprise Sahwah saw that it was Veronica, fully dressed and with a cloak thrown about her shoulders. Before Sahwah had recovered herself sufficiently to call to her, Veronica had passed through the gate into the stable yard and was lost in the shadows of the high barn.

"Whatever can she want out there?" thought Sahwah, with visions of Kaiser Bill loose and on a rampage. But there were no disturbing sounds anywhere; Kaiser Bill was not out. Veronica did not go into the barn; she went around behind it and struck into the path that led down the hill to the carriage road below. The path was bathed in moonlight for a good part of its length; Veronica was plainly visible as she ran lightly along, and Sahwah watched wonderingly. Sahwah was very far sighted, and constant practice in focusing on distant objects enabled her to distinguish plainly things quite far away. Down at the bottom of the hill, where the path met the road, Sahwah saw Veronica come to a standstill and look about her for a few moments; then a man appeared in the road and together he and Veronica moved forward and vanished into the shadows that lay beyond.

Wondering, Sahwah stared after them, and as she looked a great, nameless dread took possession of her, and she experienced exactly the same peculiar sensation she had felt in the train coming down, a feeling of prescience and foreboding, of brooding evil. It gripped her heart with cold hands and she changed her intention of going to Nyoda's room and asking what was the matter with Veronica. Suddenly she felt that Nyoda would not know. All her heart cried out in love and loyalty to Veronica. The others must not find out what she had seen to-night. Veronica had simply gone out to take a walk in the moonlight; possibly she had a headache or was unable to sleep. It was a trick of the eyes that she had thought someone had been with her in the road; the distance and the waving shadows had deceived her. Why shouldn't Veronica steal out quietly and go for a walk if she wanted to? What time was it, anyway, eleven? Twelve? Sahwah switched on the light and looked at her watch. It was half past two.

She shivered as the freshening breeze came in through the window and became conscious that her bare feet were cold on the polished floor. She jumped into bed to get warm, intending to get up again and watch until Veronica returned, but the warmth of the bed sent a delicious languor through her limbs; she yawned once, twice; her eyes began to ache in the moonlight and she closed them to shut it out.

Presently she opened them again and there was the sun shining in on the bed. Moonlight and all its spells had fled. Had she dreamed that about Veronica last night? Resolutely she sprang from bed and tiptoed down the hall to Veronica's door. The tall clock on the stair landing showed a quarter to six. The door was half ajar and she peeped in. Veronica was in bed, sound asleep, her long lashes sweeping her ruddy cheek, her lips curved in a smile, like a baby's. Her clothes were on the chair beside the bed, and they did not look as if they had been disturbed in the night.

Sahwah laughed in relief and the fear went out of her heart.

"I dreamed it," she said to herself, and went back to bed for another nap before six o'clock, which was the official rising hour at Carver House.

CHAPTER VIII

SQUADS LEFT

"M-a-r-r-k t-i-m-e, m-a-h-k!"

Sixteen pairs of feet rose and fell with a soft thudding rhythm on the hard dirt road.

"One---two---three---four! One---two---three---four! F-or-r-r-d *H'n-c-h!*"

The double line of fours wavered for a moment and then strode forward uncertainly, some on the left foot, some on the right.

"HALT!" shouted the drill sergeant in a voice bristling with disgust.

The company halted.

"What does 'Forward *Hunch*' mean?" whispered Hinpoha to Sahwah, who stood beside her.

Sahwah shook her head.

"No talking in the ranks!" came the stern order from up front. Hinpoha subsided.

"R-r-r-i-g-h-t D-r-r-e-s-s!"

Heads whirled to the right as though turned by a single screw, and bent-up left elbows pressed stiffly into neighboring ribs.

"F-r-r-o-n-t!"

Heads whirled back and arms straightened out at sides as though released by a spring.

"R-r-i-g-h-t D-r-e-s-s!"

Heads and arms repeated their swift motions.

"Hold it! *Hold* it!" rasped the voice. "Who said '*Front*?' Here, Redhead!"

Hinpoha hastily resumed the position she had abandoned too soon.

"Now, FRONT! Again, RIGHT DRESS! FRONT! R-r-r-e-a-d-y! M-a-r-r-k t-i-m-e, M-a-h-k! One-two-three-four! F-o-r-r-d HUNCH! Wake *up* there, Redhead!"

Hinpoha jumped and caught pace with the rest of her squad, who were several steps ahead, and then it dawned on her that "F-o-r-r-d Hunch!" must mean "Forward March!"

"One-two-three-four! Left! Left! Left! Left! You with the plaid tie, get in step!"

Migwan shuffled her feet and fell into rhythm.

"One-two-three-four!" The drill sergeant rapped out a jarringly emphatic accent against a tree with her staff.

She was a college gymnasium teacher home on her summer vacation; her name was Miss Raper. She had a tremendous reputation for rigid discipline in her classes. She had been trained in military drilling by an army drill officer and had acquired all his mannerisms, from the way of shouting his orders in such a way that it was next to impossible to understand them, to his merciless habit of calling out by name every one who made the slightest error.

"HALT! GUIDE RIGHT! Head to the front, there, Black Eyes! R-r-e-a-d-y! LEFT WHEEL!"

The squads wheeled in decidedly shaky order.

"Again! LEFT WHEEL! Hold your pivot there! *H-o-l-d y-o-u-r p-i-v-o-t!* Stand still, you Redhead, and wheel in place! Again! Left Wheel!"

So the endless tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp went on under the blistering July sun; the squads perspired and panted, muscles ached from the continued exertion and heels began to feel as though pounded to pulp from the violence with which they marked the accent.

But never a word of complaint did anyone breathe. They gloried in their discomfort. For this hot dusty road over which they toiled and perspired so was the road to glory, the avenue down which the girls of Oakwood, led by the Winnebagos, would march to triumph over their sworn rivals, the Hillsdale-ites.

Agony had gone through the town and picked out the most promising girls, whom, with the addition of the Winnebagos, she formed into a company. They drilled for an hour every morning with Miss Raper in the wide dirt road that ran along the foot of the hill behind Carver House.

The hour drew to a close with a final strenuous series of left and right wheels and the Winnebagos sought the shade of the trees along the roadside and fanned themselves with leaves.

"How did we do to-day, Miss Raper?" inquired Agony, as the drill sergeant prepared to depart.

"I congratulate you," replied Miss Raper with sarcastic wit. "I never saw it done worse."

The company recognized the fact that it was a tactical error to try to draw any praises to themselves from Miss Raper. Yet they did not consider themselves abused, nor did they harbor any hard feelings toward her on account of her sharp tongue. They realized that she was a "crackerjack" trainer, and for the sake of winning that contest they were willing to endure her caustic comments meekly.

"I'll never get left and right wheel correctly," sighed Oh-Pshaw with a discouraged air. "No matter which one she says, I always go in the opposite direction. I get so fussed when she looks at me that I can't tell my left foot from my right."

"Never mind, you'll get it in time," said Migwan soothingly. "I had the same trouble at first, but I'm getting sort of used to her now."

"I'm awfully stupid about things like that," mourned Oh-Pshaw, "and I'm afraid I'll never get over getting fussed. I never *could* stand up in front of anybody and perform; the minute I see people looking at me I forget everything I know and stand there like a dummy."

"Cheer up, child," said Migwan, "it isn't nearly as bad as you make out. Just think of the command and forget all about yourself and Miss Raper and then you'll get it right every time."

"I hope so," said Oh-Pshaw with a sigh.

"You'll *have* to get over it," said Agony emphatically. "If you make any mistakes on the night of the contest--!" Agony's voice hinted at the awful consequences which would follow such a misdemeanor.

"She isn't going to make any mistakes the night of the contest," said Migwan, putting her arm through Oh-Pshaw's and starting off toward Carver House.

The rest sauntered after them in twos and threes, practising drill steps as they went. Sahwah slipped her arm through Veronica's.

"Let's go over into the woods awhile before lunch," she said, "just us two."

Veronica came willingly and together they struck into the shady wood path, flecked here and there with irregular patches of sunlight which filtered through the branches above them. It was a pleasant place, this strip of woods crowning a gently rolling hill behind the town. Fallen logs thickly upholstered with moss made delightful sofas especially designed for friends to sit upon and exchange confidences. Veronica and Sahwah often came here on their walks.

Veronica was in a merry mood to-day and danced gaily down the path in pursuit of butterflies; waved her hands and called out gay greetings to the squirrels and chipmunks, and constantly exclaimed aloud in wonder and delight at some bit of brilliant orange-colored fungus, or some bright flower that greeted her eyes.

Sahwah was more quiet, and there was a sober look in her eyes. Her mind was filled with perplexity, and her heart with foreboding, and the cause was Veronica. The mystery that seemed to be hovering over her head had not been dispelled as the days went on; on the contrary, it had been deepened. Several more times Sahwah had seen her slipping out of the house at dead of night and an incident had occurred several days before which Sahwah was not able to put out of her mind.

Sahwah was behind the big carved settle in the hall, fishing for a bead that had rolled underneath, when the telephone rang. The telephone was in the hall, at the other end near the dining-room door. Sahwah sighed, thinking she would have to crawl out and answer it, because Nyoda and the girls were all out in the yard working among the vegetables, but just then she heard Veronica answer the call, and went on placidly feeling for her bead. Near to the telephone as she was, she could not help hearing every word Veronica said.

Instead of the "Mrs. Sheridan is in the garden, I will call her," that Sahwah had expected to hear. Veronica had answered, "This is Veronica talking. Yes, I can. I will come immediately. The coast is clear. No one is in the house just now and I can slip away without rousing any suspicions."

Then Sahwah heard her hang up the receiver and pass out of the hall. Sahwah sat up quickly and bumped her head sharply on the back of the settle. Then, as the significance of the conversation she had just overheard sank into her mind she remembered Veronica's mysterious nocturnal errands, and it came to her in a startled flash that Veronica was carrying on something which was a secret from the others---was stealing away from the house to meet someone. She sprang out from behind the settle, not knowing what she intended to do, but bent on seeing where Veronica went.

The hall was empty; Veronica was not there. Sahwah darted to the front door, expecting to see Veronica going down the walk to the street, but there was no sign of her. The street lay clear in the sunshine for its whole length down the hill; there was not a soul in it. Veronica could not have gone out the front way. Neither could she have gone out the back way, because the vegetable garden came up close to the kitchen door, and there Nyoda and the Winnebagos, including Agony and Oh-Pshaw, were working. Veronica must still be in the house. Sahwah went back in and looked through all the rooms for her, upstairs and down, but she was nowhere to be found.

Sahwah sat down on the lowest step of the stairway and thought, and thought, and a great dread came over her and would not be beaten back, a dread of something nameless and undefined, a sinister something that hovered over her with great dark wings, like the Thunder Bird. In an agony of love and sorrow Sahwah faced the fact which her prophetic soul, in its new insight, told her, even while her loyal heart tried to stop the whisper with a resolute hand.

Veronica had been caught in the toils of enemy agents, and was in some way having dealings with them. Sahwah's heart turned to water within her, and the strength went from her knees so that she could not stand up. Veronica, one of the Winnebagos! It was too horrible to believe! She couldn't believe it! She *wouldn't* believe it! Her loyal heart stood up firmly to her prophetic soul and shouted defiant denials at its insinuating whispers. No, no! Veronica was not deceiving them; she was the sincere, true-hearted girl they thought her, and she was as loyal to America as they were. There must be some explanation for her mysterious actions; it would all come out in time. She would be true to Veronica and keep what she knew to herself, until she found out the truth. She would never let Veronica know that she suspected her, never. All her love for Veronica came over her in a rush and scattered to flight the dark suspicions.

A call from the garden broke on her ear. "Sahwah! Oh, Sahwah! Where are you?"

"Here," she answered, appearing at the back door.

"Where have you been?" called Hinpoha. "We've been calling and calling for you. Come look at the robin trying to swallow the enormous angle worm twice as big as himself!"

Sahwah went out, trying to look perfectly natural, and feeling as though her secret were written on her face in letters a foot high. She looked at the girls closely, to see if by any chance Veronica were among them, but she was not.

"Where's Veronica?" she asked in a voice which she hoped sounded idle and casual.

"Gone up to her room to lie down a while," replied Nyoda. "She got a headache from the sun. She asked to be left undisturbed until dinner time."

("Oh, if she only *were* in her room," thought poor Sahwah!)

"Come on and help pick raspberries," said Nyoda. "We miss your nimble fingers."

So Sahwah fell to work among the bushes, absently stripping off the luscious red globes into the baskets, but her mind was far away and she took little part in the gay talk that went on around her. By and by, when the berries were all picked, Migwan said:

"Let's make a basket of leaves and fill it with some of the largest berries and take it to Veronica."

Sahwah's heart bounded painfully. "Let me take it up," she begged.

"All right," replied Migwan. "The rest of us are going to walk over with Agony and Oh-Pshaw while they take their berries home."

The rest went out of the front gate and Sahwah, not knowing what else to do, went upstairs to Veronica's room, carrying the berries. She planned to leave them on Veronica's dresser as a surprise for her when she should return, and then sit in her own room and read until dinner time. Thinking Veronica's room was empty she went right in without knocking. Then she paused in astonishment, for there on the bed lay Veronica, with a wet towel tied around her head and her forehead drawn up into painful headache lines. Sahwah nearly dropped the berries on the floor in her surprise, but recovered herself with an effort and approached the bed.

Veronica opened her eyes and smiled when she saw Sahwah. Sahwah, unable to think of a thing to say, held out the berries silently, and Veronica exclaimed in delight:

"You dear thing," she said, taking the dainty basket in one hand and catching hold of Sahwah's hand with the other. "You're so good to me," she whispered, squeezing the hand she held and looking up at Sahwah with wide-open, candid eyes. "Come, sit on my bed, and make my headache go away, like you did once before."

Sahwah sat down beside her and smoothed her throbbing forehead with light, soothing fingers that had a magic power to charm away aches and pains. As she worked over Veronica and caught the sweet, straightforward glances from her eyes all her doubts concerning her vanished, and in their place there came uncertainty as to whether she herself had not been suffering under a delusion that afternoon. Had she really heard the telephone ring and Veronica answer it? Had hearing played some bizarre trick on her? She seemed to be perfectly awake and in her right mind in other respects. The girls had evidently not noticed anything peculiar about her actions when she came out of the house, not even Nyoda, the sharp sighted. Clearly she had not been walking in her sleep. She had certainly heard the telephone ring; she had certainly heard Veronica answer it. She had understood every word she had said perfectly; the hall had been absolutely still. And yet--she had not heard Veronica go out of either door! She remembered that distinctly, but her first impulse had been to wait until Veronica had gone out of the front door and then look after her. It was impossible not to have heard the front door open; one hinge was rusty and it emitted a dismal squeak every time the door opened. But if she had gone out of the back door the others would have seen her and would not have said that she was upstairs in her room. That was the point which made Sahwah doubt her own memory. Veronica had not left the house; she must have gone right upstairs. And she must have said something else through the telephone and Sahwah's ears had played her a trick. It was easy to have missed her in her search through the big house; Sahwah had merely run into one room after another, given a hasty glance around and then run on to the next.

Sahwah smoothed the brown satiny forehead lovingly, and laughed at herself for a suspicious idiot. And yet, the occurrence would not go from her mind, and she wakened in the night to think about it hour after hour and when she did sleep she was oppressed with a constant feeling of uneasiness, and woke again and again with that sense of groping after something that had just occurred, but which had escaped her utterly.

Then the next morning her doubts all vanished once more when the Winnebagos assembled on the front lawn for flag raising, and Veronica, whose turn it was to hoist the Stars and Stripes, stepped out with shining eyes, and with loving hands fastened the flag of her adopted country to the waiting halyard, carefully keeping it from touching the ground, and with an attitude both proud and humble sent it fluttering to the top of the pole. Then she joined in the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner" with all her soul in her voice.

Clearly her actions told more eloquently than any passionate words her love and reverence for that flag and all it symbolized. No, it could not be possible that she could be connected with anything that aimed to harm it.

And yet--that very night Sahwah had seen Veronica leaving the house after midnight when the rest were all asleep, and going down the hill behind the barn, and at the sight Sahwah had experienced that same indescribable chill of fear that she had felt in the train; a peculiar sense of hovering danger; a sensation which she could never clearly define while it lasted nor describe afterwards.

She still kept the secret, but it haunted her day and night and tormented her with its thousand possibilities. At last it seemed as if she could endure it no longer without an explanation of some kind and she made up her mind to ask Veronica about it. For this end she had asked her to come into the woods to-day.

But the sight of Veronica, skipping gaily before her along the path, whistling to the birds, calling the squirrels, whispering affectionate words to the shy flowers, made her fears seem ridiculous, and her resolution wavered and threatened to crumble. There was not a shadow on Veronica's brow, not a glint of furtiveness in her eye, nowhere a hint of any secret knowledge or subdued excitement. Her eyes met Sahwah's with candid directness, her laughter was

spontaneous and not forced; she was neither paler than usual nor more flushed. How perfectly absurd to connect this happy-hearted girl with anything suspicious!

And yet---Sahwah knew now beyond a doubt that she had not been dreaming when she saw Veronica leave the house at night, and there was still that strange conversation over the telephone.

Sahwah slackened her pace and rubbed her ankles together, a gesture which in her denoted intensely concentrated thought. Veronica looked back to see where she was and came back to her, slipping her arm around her waist and hugging her in an ecstasy of girlish delight, born of the beautiful weather and the release from strenuous military drill.

"Oh, look at the darling old stump!" she exclaimed. "Why, it must be *miles* across! Think what a tree that must have been! See, it has a sort of step up and then a broad seat, just like a throne. Come on, let's climb up and pretend we're queens."

She climbed up on the stump and drew Sahwah up after her.

"Why are you so quiet?" she asked finally, twisting her head and looking around into Sahwah's face. "Have you a headache? The sun was so hot out there in the road where we were drilling, and the glare was so blinding."

"No, I haven't a headache," replied Sahwah slowly.

"A toothache, maybe?" suggested Veronica in a playful voice in which there was a dash of concern. It was unusual indeed for Sahwah to lose her animation.

"No, it isn't a toothache," replied Sahwah. "It's just something I've been trying to figure out, that's all."

"Can I help you figure it out?" asked Veronica eagerly.

"Veronica," began Sahwah, striving to speak in an offhand manner, "if---if you had a friend that you loved and that friend did something that you couldn't understand and which seemed very strange and even suspicious to you, what would you do?"

Veronica's eyes took on a thoughtful, far-away look, but they met Sahwah's squarely. "If I loved that friend very much," she replied slowly, "and had always trusted her before, I would say to myself, 'This is my friend whom I love and trust I don't understand what she is doing, but I won't permit myself to have any doubts about her now. I will have faith that she is doing nothing wrong. I will wait patiently and see what happens further, and very likely the matter will soon be explained to my satisfaction,'"

"But," continued Sahwah, slowly and with an evident effort, "supposing you *had* done that, had refused to have any doubts concerning your friend and had waited patiently, trusting that it was all right, but things had not been explained to your satisfaction, and other things had happened, things still stranger and more suspicious?"

To Sahwah, watching intently, it seemed that Veronica's large luminous eyes had suddenly filmed over like an animal's in pain, but she answered naturally, in her calm, sweet voice, "Then, if I really loved that friend, and was afraid my suspicions were going to injure our friendship, I would go to her and tell her what I had heard and seen and ask her for an explanation."

Sahwah was silent for a moment, seemingly engaged in some inward struggle with herself. Then she cleared her throat nervously and moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue.

"Veronica," she burst out desperately, "why did you go out of the house in the middle of the night on several occasions, and whom were you talking to on the telephone that day when you said to someone that you could slip out at that time without arousing any suspicions?"

Veronica started painfully and stared at Sahwah in amazement, and Sahwah fancied she saw a great terror leap up in her eyes. Veronica looked at her a moment, the expression of astonishment frozen on her face, and then to Sahwah's great bewilderment she laughed aloud, a genuine, mirthful, unforced, ringing laugh.

"Sahwah dear," she said, looking her straight in the eye, "it's perfectly true, all that you said. I did go out of the house in the middle of the night, and I did say just exactly what you said you heard me say over the telephone. But as for the explanation, I can't give it now. It may be that you will never find out. It is not my secret, and I cannot tell it, even to clear away any suspicions you may have regarding it."

Sahwah gazed at her uncertainly, going over in her mind the unexpected effect her words had had upon Veronica, and the mysterious thing she had said in reply. They had both stepped off the throne and stood facing each other in the path. Veronica came up close to Sahwah and slipped a hand around each of her elbows and squeezed them, her favorite caress.

"Sahwah, dear," she said soberly, while the hurt animal look came back into her eyes, "you wouldn't want me to tell you my secret, would you, dear? I wouldn't want you to tell me yours, if you had one."

Sahwah felt rebuked and abashed, and very, very sorry. Her love for Veronica flamed higher than ever; all doubts concerning her vanished for good; she hugged and caressed her and begged to be forgiven for her foolishness, and with arms tightly entwined the two went blithely down the path.

CHAPTER IX

THE BABES IN THE WOODS

Arm in arm Sahwah and Veronica wandered on through the woods farther and farther away from the Oakwood side. They crossed the brow of the hill and descended to the valley on the other side. There they found a merry little stream which tumbled along with frequent cataracts over mossy rocks, and followed its course, often stopping to dip their hands in the bright water and let the drops flow through their fingers.

"I'd love to be a brook," said Sahwah longingly, "and go splashing and singing along over the smooth stones, and jump down off the high rocks, and catch the sunlight in my ripples, and have lovely silvery fishes swimming around in me. I'd sing them all to sleep every night, and wake them up in the morning with a kiss, and never, never let anyone catch them!"

"You love the water better than anything else, don't you?" said Veronica, looking at Sahwah and thinking how much like the brook she was herself.

"Oh, I do, I do," said Sahwah, taking off her shoes and stockings and wading into the limpid stream. Soon she was dancing in the water, frolicking like a nixie, catching the water up in her hands and tossing it into the air and then darting out from beneath it before it could fall upon her. Veronica laughed and clapped her hands as she watched Sahwah, and wished she were an artist that she might paint the picture.

Finally they came to a place where the little stream poured down over a high rock and ran through a broad gully, widening into a great pond in the natural basin, which was like a huge bowl scooped out of rock.

"This must be the place they call the Devil's Punch Bowl that Nyoda told us about," said Sahwah. "See, it looks just like a punch bowl."

"I wonder if it's very deep," said Veronica, peering into the water from a safe distance away from the edge.

"Shall I dive in and find out?" asked Sahwah.

"Oh, don't, don't," said Veronica, catching hold of her arm.

"Don't worry, you precious old goosie," said Sahwah, laughing. "I didn't mean *really*. I was only in fun. Did you think I was going in with my clothes on? It must be deep, though, or the Indian couldn't have jumped in. That must be the rock up there he jumped from," she said, indicating a flat, platform-like rock that overhung the gully some forty feet above their heads. "Don't you remember Nyoda telling about it; how the soldiers were chasing this Indian and he got out on that rock and dove down into the Punch Bowl and swam under water and they never thought of looking down there for him?"

Both looked at the rock jutting out over the water, and shuddered at the height of the drop. At the far side of the gully the pond became a brook again and flowed on in a narrow channel the same as before. The woods were denser on this side of the gully and there was less sunlight filtering down through the branches. Several times they came upon clusters of fragile, pale Indian pipes growing out of wet, decayed stumps.

"Oh, it's nice here," breathed Veronica, revelling in the coolness.

"This is the forest primeval," quoted Sahwah,
"The murmuring pines and the hemlocks---"

"Only they aren't murmuring pines and hemlocks," she finished. "They're mostly oaks and beeches."

"It isn't the primeval forest, either," said Veronica. "There's a tent over there between the trees."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Sahwah, "and here am I, coming along with my shoes and stockings in my hand!" She sat down hastily and put on her foot-gear.

The tent stood quite close to the brook path and when they were nearly up to it they heard, coming from around the other side of it, a sound of vigorous splashing, punctuated by protesting squawks. Involuntarily the two girls stood still and listened. Above the squawking rose a voice.

"'Curse on him,' quote false Sextus, 'will not the villain drown?'" it declaimed dramatically.

Then in a moment the splashes and squawks increased to an uproar, and then around the corner of the tent there came a chicken in full flight, its leathers dripping with water, in spite of which it made amazingly fast time. After the chicken came a balloon-like figure in a sky-blue bathrobe, uttering breathless grunts which were evidently intended to be peremptory commands to the chicken to halt its flight. At the sight of the two girls standing in the path the bath-robed pursuer fell back in astonishment.

"What noble Lucumo comes next to taste our Roman cheer?" he exclaimed with a dramatic wave of the hand.

Then he stood transfixed, the gesture frozen in mid-air. "Sahwah!" he gasped. "Veronica! where in the world-----"

The girls started forward with unbelieving eyes. "Slim!" cried Sahwah. "What are you doing here?"

"Tenting on the Old Camp Ground," replied Slim, holding his voluminous bathrobe primly around him with one hand to cover the bathing suit which he wore under it, and shaking hands vigorously with the other.

Then, making a trumpet of his hands, he called loudly, "Captain, oh, Captain, come here quick!"

There was an upheaval inside the tent and the sound of something falling, and in a moment a second youth appeared around the corner of the tent, clad in khaki trousers and a blue and white blazer.

"What's the matter?" he asked in alarm. Then he saw the girls and threw up his hands in amazement. "For the love of Mike!" he exclaimed elegantly.

"Captain!" cried Sahwah.

Rapturous greetings followed.

"Of all things," said Sahwah, "to run across you two in the woods like this! What on earth are you doing here? We thought you were doing some summer work at your college."

"We are," replied the Captain, looking from one to the other of the girls with a face beaming with delight at the unexpected meeting. "We're making a survey of different parts of the state---it's part of our course---and incidentally we're compiling certain statistics for the government."

"Oh!" said the two girls respectfully.

"But what, if I might make so bold as to ask," said the Captain, "are *you* two doing here in the wet, wild woods, all by your wild lone?"

Sahwah explained and extended a cordial invitation for the two boys to come to Carver House whenever they had time.

"Is Hinpoha there?" asked Slim and the Captain simultaneously.

"She certainly is," replied Sahwah.

Slim squinted critically down his nose at his tub-like form. "Do you think I've gotten any thinner?" he asked anxiously.

Sahwah scrutinized him closely for signs of reduction and decided he *might* possibly be half a pound thinner than when she saw him last. Slim sighed and looked pensive and Sahwah had hard work to keep her face straight.

"But what on earth was all that racket as we came up?" she asked, unable to restrain her curiosity on that point any longer. "What were you chasing the chicken for?"

Slim's eye roved regretfully back toward the trees among which the chicken had vanished, and the Captain answered for him.

"You see," he exclaimed, "today is Slim's birthday and we were going to celebrate by having a chicken dinner. So Slim went out to buy a chicken and came back with a live one. Then he didn't have the heart to chop its head off, and was trying to drown it in a barrel of water when you came up. By the way, Slim, where is it now?"

Slim pointed to the bushes with an expression of chagrin on his fat face. "It's gone," he said with a sigh of regret. "A dollar and eighty-seven cents' worth of chicken stew running loose on the landscape."

"But it wasn't the nerve I lacked to chop its head off," he added, looking reproachfully at the Captain. "It was the hatchet. You see," he explained, "we didn't exactly come prepared to catch our meals on the hoof, so to speak, and all I had to chop his head off with was the can-opener on my pocket knife, and that wouldn't work, so I *had* to drown him."

"Oh, you funny boys!" said Sahwah, laughing uncontrollably.

"I think you might have helped me hold him down," said Slim to the Captain in an injured tone.

"I couldn't," replied the Captain gravely. "The butter got overcome with the heat and I was reviving it with a fan."

"Oh, you babes in the woods, you!" said Sahwah, with another burst of laughter. "You must be having the time of your lives."

"We are," replied the Captain. "Won't you stay to dinner? There isn't anything to eat but a can of tomato soup, but you're welcome to that."

"Oh, we hadn't better," replied Sahwah, "they will be wondering at home what has become of us, and besides, it would make too much trouble for you."

"Too much trouble!" snorted the Captain. "That's just like a girl. As if a girl ever cared how much trouble she made for a fellow! Come on and stay, we want you. We're lonesome."

Thus pressed, the girls accepted the invitation, and pretty soon they were all sitting in a circle under the trees with cups and spoons in their hands, and the Captain was singing at the top of his voice:

"Glorious, glorious,
One can of soup for the four of us,
Praises be, there are no more of us,
For the four of us can drink it all alone!"

Lunch over, they exchanged gossip under the trees for a merry half hour, then the girls took their departure and sped homeward to carry the news to Carver House.

CHAPTER X

THE OPENING CAREER OF MANY EYES

"Good morning, Winnebago friends,
With your faces as bright as mine,
Good morning, Winnebago friends,
You're surely looking fine,
Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust,
If the pancakes don't get you the syrup must
Good morning, Winnebago friends,
With your faces as bright as,
Your faces as bright as, Your faces as bright as mine!"

The Winnebagos, happy and hungry, gathered around the breakfast table in answer to the summons which Hinpoha had just sent echoing through the house. With the advent of the Winnebagos at Carver House, Nyoda's melodiously chiming Japanese dinner gong had been discarded in favor of a hoarse-throated fish horn, which bore some similarity to the sound of a bugle and was therefore to be preferred because it had more of a military flavor.

"Where's Sahwah?" asked Nyoda, noticing that her place was vacant

Nobody knew.

Hinpoha blew a second blast of the horn up the stairway, making a noise that would have waked the Seven Sleepers with ease, but there was no answer.

"Sahwah must be out taking a morning walk," announced Hinpoha, when her horn blast had failed to rout out the absentee, "she's forever exercising herself in the early morning hours---as if we didn't get enough exercise doing military drill! It's no wonder she's like a beanpole. I would be, too, if I was forever trotting the way she is. Here she comes now, tearing up the walk like a racehorse!"

"She probably heard your horn on the other side of the woods," said Nyoda, laughing, "and got here before it stopped blowing."

Sahwah came in quite out of breath and evidently tremendously enthusiastic about something.

"Nyoda," she burst out as soon as she was inside the door, "how fast would a Primitive Woman go up and how many pounds would she pull?"

"What?" asked Nyoda, looking up inquiringly from the cup of cocoa she was handing to Gladys. The rest of the Winnebagos looked at Sahwah in open-mouthed astonishment.

"How fast would a Primitive Woman go up and how many pounds would she pull?" repeated Nyoda. "What is it, a riddle?"

"No, a kite," replied Sahwah impatiently. "I mean a kite built like Many Eyes, our Primitive Woman symbol; would she fly high and pull a heavy tail?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," replied Nyoda. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I've entered the kite-flying contest that the Boy Scouts of this town are having, and I thought of building my kite in the Primitive Woman shape."

"You've entered a kite-flying contest that the Boy Scouts are having!" exclaimed Hinpoha in surprise. "How on earth did you happen to do that?"

"It's open to outsiders," replied Sahwah. "I saw a Scout nailing a bulletin on a tree in the square down town challenging all the boys in town to a kite-flying contest on Commons Field next Saturday afternoon."

"All the *boys* in town!" replied Hinpoha. "Since when are you a boy?"

"Well," replied Sahwah, "I read the sign and I remembered how I used to love to fly kites with my brother and I thought what fun it would be to go into the contest. So I ran after the Scout who had nailed up the bulletin and asked him if we Winnebagos couldn't enter the contest, and he was awfully nice about it when he heard we were Camp Fire Girls. He said of course we couldn't build a decent kite, no girl could, but if we wanted to go into the contest and get beaten the Scouts wouldn't care. So I wrote our name in the space under the announcement that was left for the entries, and we're going to be in the contest! On the way home I thought of building the kite in the shape of Primitive Woman, which would be original and symbolic. Do you think she'd fly high, Nyoda?" she asked anxiously.

"I can't say," replied Nyoda. "I'll have to confess that I know nothing whatever about the art of flying kites. My childhood was sadly neglected, I'm afraid, but that's one thing I never did. All you can do is make one and try."

Sahwah set to work right after breakfast with sticks of wood and brown wrapping paper and by afternoon her kite was ready for its trial flight. All the Winnebagos went out to help fly it. The trial was a success. Primitive Woman soared high at a good rate of speed and pulled a five-pound tail. Jubilant, Sahwah stripped the common wrapping paper from the frame and with fine brown paper which Nyoda gave her began to construct a Primitive Woman which was a work of art. Hinpoha painted the features on the triangle-shaped head, and under her clever brush Many Eyes was soon looking out on the world with a serene and confident smile. The Winnebagos were enchanted with the result and all enthusiastic about the contest now.

"Many Eyes, you're holding the honor of the Camp Fire Girls in your hands," said Sahwah solemnly. "You've got to fly faster than any kite a mere Boy Scout can invent. You've got to win!" And it seemed to the girls, surrounding Many Eyes as she stood up against the wall to dry, that her smile widened in a promise of victory.

"Let's make a magic over her," suggested Hinpoha, "and then she *can't* lose," Hinpoha was always having rings wished on her fingers, and running around her chair to change her luck, and building rain jinxes before starting out on excursions.

"Let's find a four-leaf clover and fasten it on her," said Migwan. "Where'll we find one?"

"Out in the woods there's a place where there are some," replied Sahwah.

"We might take our supper out in the woods," suggested Nyoda. "Aren't we going to have a Ceremonial Meeting tonight to take Agony and Oh-Pshaw into the Winnebagos? We could have our Council Fire out in the woods after supper."

"Let's take Many Eyes along and make her our official mascot," suggested Sahwah. "We can install her with ceremonies, like we did Eeny-Meeny."

This bit of nonsense was seized upon by the Winnebagos as a grand inspiration. When Agony and Oh-Pshaw arrived at Carver House with their Ceremonial dresses in neat packages under their arms and their lists of honors in their hands they found the Winnebagos forming a procession out by the back gate. Sahwah headed the parade, holding up above her

head a huge kite made in the form of the symbolic Primitive Woman, with a long tail which the rest of the Winnebagos carried like pages carrying a queen's court train.

"What on earth!" began Agony.

"Get on the end of the line and help carry her tail!" commanded Sahwah.

"What's the idea?" demanded Agony suspiciously. "Are we getting initiated?"

"No," explained Sahwah. "This is Many Eyes, our entry in the Boy Scout's kite-flying contest. We're conveying her in state to the Council Rock. We're going to make her our official mascot and then she'll be sure to win the contest."

"And we're going to find a four-leaf clover and put it on her and render her impassable," said Hinpoha. Hinpoha was trying to think of "unsurpassable," and "impassable" was the nearest she came to it.

Agony and Oh-Pshaw joined themselves on to the procession with alacrity.

"We passed the Boy Scouts' bulletin board on the way over," said Agony, "and we saw that the Winnebagos were entered in the contest."

"Were there any more entries?" asked Sahwah eagerly.

"Several," replied Agony. "Scout Troops Number One, Two and Three were entered."

"Now," said Hinpoha, who seemed to be mistress of ceremonies, "we're going to make a magic so that Many Eyes will win, and first we are going to do the Indian Silence. We're going to march to the woods in single file, carrying Many Eyes, and nobody must speak a word, or the charm will be broken. Nobody must speak until we've found the four leaf clover."

"How perfectly epic!" exclaimed Agony, falling in with the spirit of the occasion.

"Is everybody ready?" asked Hinpoha. "Come on, then. Start!"

The procession moved off like a snake past the barn and down the hill, Many Eyes smiling serenely ahead of her. The silence continued deep and sepulchral all the way down the hill and quite to the edge of the woods, and then Nyoda suddenly exclaimed, "The supper basket! Who has it?"

Nobody had it!

The Winnebagos looked sheepishly at one another and then Migwan and Gladys offered to go back and get it.

"We'll sit right here, and wait for you," said Hinpoha, "and none of us will speak a word until you come."

Many Eyes was propped against a tree while her escort sat around on the ground holding their handkerchiefs in front of their mouths to keep from talking. Migwan and Gladys presently came panting up and the procession resumed its way into the woods. It was harder walking here and the tail-bearers often stumbled against each other or accidentally kicked each other's shins, and when that happened they had to compress their lips tightly to keep back the exclamations of surprise or pain that involuntarily sought expression. The procession wound up beside the stream which Sahwah had

discovered in the woods on the other side of the hill, at a smooth, grassy spot where the clover grew in abundance. Here they set Many Eyes down on the ground and began hunting diligently for the symbol of good luck. It was a good thing that the four leaf clover was found soon---and by Sahwah, too, which was taken as a further omen of good luck---or the strain of the silence might have been fatal to a few of the searchers. Agony was ready to burst long before the time limit was up.

Then, when the charm of the silence had gotten in its good work, and the little green quatrefoil had been fastened into the outstretched right hand of Many Eyes, Hinpoha selected several soft, flat stones from the stream and carved them with further good luck omens---the swastika, the horseshoe, and all the other signs she could think of that were supposed to bring good luck. These were to be a part of the kite's tail. A little later they all clasped hands and wished for success on the evening star. Then, to her great delight, Hinpoha caught a glimpse of the slender new moon over her left shoulder, and registered her wish on that. Meanwhile the others noticed a big black spider letting himself down from the tree above, directly in front of Many Eyes---another omen of good fortune. Never had the signs been so auspicious for any undertaking.

Nyoda carried Many Eyes with her when she took her place on the Council Rock. The Council Fire was to be held on the great flat rock that overhung the Devil's Punch Bowl; an impressive place indeed to hold a Camp Fire Ceremonial, up there right under the stars, it seemed, with the wind fiddling through the branches all around them and the water whispering to itself below. The rock was about twenty feet wide and as flat as a table.

Agony and Oh-Pshaw and Veronica, who were the lowest in rank of the Winnebagos, had gathered the wood for the fire and laid the fagots in place in the center of the rock, with the bow and drill and tinder beside it and the supply of firewood nearby.

Nyoda smiled whimsically at Many Eyes, standing against the perpendicular back ledge of the Council Rock, and with her heart full of love for the girls who could get so much fun out of a kite, wished success to their cause with all her soul. Then she stood up in the center of the rock and sent forth the clear call, the summons for the tribe of Wohelo to come to the Council Fire.

The call rang far out over the water and came echoing back from the surrounding hills, and before the echoes had died away it was answered from the depths of the wood, and then shadowy figures came stealing forward from between the tall trees, a silent file that came winding down to the Council Rock in a stately procession. The circle closed around Nyoda and she stooped to kindle the fire. As the bow flashed quickly back and forth and the drill whirled in its center, a low, musical chant rose from the circle:

"Keep rolling, keep rolling,
Keep the fire sticks
Briskly rolling, rolling,
Grinding the wood dust,
Smoke arises!
Smoke arises!
Ah, the smoke, sweetly scented,
It will rise, it will rise, it will rise!"

The chant swelled out in volume to a dramatic climax as a puff of smoke burst forth beneath the point of the whirling drill. Nyoda adroitly caught the spark in a bed of tinder and raised it to her lips, blowing gently to fan it into flame, while the chant was resumed:

"Dusky forest now darker grown,
Broods in silence o'er its own,
Till the wee spark to a flame has blown,
And living fire leaps up to greet
The song of Wohelo."

The "wee spark" turned into a tiny point of flame and the tinder burst out into a merry blaze. Nyoda dropped it into the pile of fagots and the ceremonial fire was kindled, while the Winnebagos sprang to their feet, ready to sing, "Burn, fire, burn."

When that had been sung the Winnebagos still remained on their feet. There was a moment of silence and then they sang a hearty cheer:

"Oh, we cheer, oh, we cheer for Wohelo,
For our comrades and friends so true,
And our loyalty ever shall linger,
Oh, Nakwisi, we sing to you!
Oh, Chapa, we sing to you!
Oh, Medmangi, we sing to you!"

"Oh, Katherine, here's to you,
Our hearts will e'er be true,
We will never find your equal
Though we search the whole world through!"

They were singing to the absent Winnebagos who would always be present in spirit wherever the Winnebagos were gathered together.

Agony and Oh-Pshaw were touched and felt a lump rising in their throats; it was so beautiful, this bond of affection between the Winnebagos. They were completely carried away by the dramatic atmosphere of a Winnebago Council Fire. They had never taken part in such an elaborate one. Both of them, by spasmodic efforts, had attained the rank of Fire Maker in the group to which they had formerly belonged, whose Guardian had meant well enough, but had neither the time nor the talent to become a successful Camp Fire leader. The group had never accomplished much, and had finally drifted apart, as many groups do, for lack of a powerful welding influence.

Agony and Oh-Pshaw, having been instrumental in starting the group, had "run" it to their hearts' content; that is, Agony ran it, for her dominating personality completely overshadowed her sister along with the rest of the members. Agony "ran" the Guardian, too, who admired her immensely, thought everything she did a symptom of genius, stood not a little in awe of her family connections, and let her have full sway in everything. Agony was fond of the Guardian, too, but naturally was not profoundly influenced by association with her.

But there was an altogether different atmosphere in the Winnebago group, as Agony soon discovered. No one girl had any more to say than the others, all worked together in perfect harmony, and all worshipped the same sun, Nyoda. She was a great lode star that drew them together, and kept them circling contentedly in their little orbits; she was their oracle, their all-wise counsellor, their loving elder sister. Around her the Winnebagos clustered, as the populace did about Peter, anxious to have his shadow fall upon them. The Twins had also fallen under her spell and after their first meeting had become her adoring slaves. "Run" Nyoda? The thought never entered Agony's mind.

In her own group Agony had achieved her honors easily, for the Guardian had not been too insistent about having things done well, and some of her honors were really only half earned. So she had become a Fire Maker without any strenuous efforts. Now her great ambition was to be a Torch Bearer. All the year at school she had looked with envy on the little round silver pins that Hinpoha and Migwan and Gladys wore and noticed how people who understood the meaning of that little pin always exclaimed admiringly, "Oh, you're a Torch Bearer!" Agony could not bear to have anyone get ahead of her, she must be a Torch Bearer, too. She could hurry up and get enough honor beads by the next Council meeting to be eligible.

After the ceremony of the installation was over and she and Oh-Pshaw were really Winnebagos, she spoke of the desire which lay near to her heart. It was in the little intimate talk time which always took place during the Ceremonial Meeting, when the flames began to burn down to embers, just before it was time to sing, "Now Our Camp Fire Fadeth."

"Nyoda," she said confidently, "I'm ready to become a Torch Bearer at the next meeting."

Nyoda looked at her with serious, thoughtful eyes. In the Winnebago group, it had not been customary for the girls to announce that they were worthy to be called Torch Bearer. Nyoda had herself conferred that honor upon them when she considered them worthy. No one had ever voiced her belief that she was ready, although Nyoda knew how each one had coveted the title. She was able to read Agony clearly, and knew that the keynote of her life was ambition. She was pretty certain that Agony wanted to be a Torch Bearer because it was the highest rank to which a Camp Fire Girl could aspire, and she wanted to be on the top. As yet she had seen no evidence of a humble desire to lose herself so deeply in the joy of service for others that self was forgotten. Agony was a born leader, there was no doubt about that, but Nyoda knew that she was not yet ruler over her own spirit. To the Winnebagos it seemed that Agony was already a Torch Bearer beyond compare, but Nyoda's inner voice of wisdom whispered, "Not yet." Agony must win that title in humility and self-forgetfulness before she could glory in it.

So she replied quietly, "When you have earned the right to be called Torch Bearer you shall be made one, but remember, Agony, that one does not become a Torch Bearer merely by earning a certain number of honor beads and standing up and repeating the Torch Bearer's Desire. A girl must have shown a steady power of leadership for a long time, and must satisfy all the questions in the Guardian's mind about her fitness for the rank. Also remember, Agony, that true leadership does not necessarily mean taking the world by storm and being tremendously popular with people. It may sometimes mean retiring to the background and playing a very insignificant part, instead of being always in the limelight. A good leader is first of all a good team worker, one who is willing to suppress her own personal inclinations for the good of the cause."

Agony, who was not given to examining her own faults very closely, failed to see wherein she fell short in any of these requirements, and was filled with elation as she thought that just as soon as Nyoda began taking special notice of her she would see that she was a candidate *par excellence* for the title of Torch Bearer.

"You shouldn't have asked to be made a Torch Bearer!" Sahwah whispered in her ear while Nyoda was stirring up the fire. "That isn't the way to do it; it's like handing yourself a bouquet!"

"Well, I didn't know it," Agony whispered back, not a whit abashed. "In our other group we had to ask for everything we got or we never would have gotten it."

Nyoda then turned to Oh-Pshaw, who had sat silent and thoughtful during the whole Council Meeting.

"Are you ready to be a Torch Bearer, too?" she asked.

"Oh, no," replied Oh-Pshaw modestly. "I'm not worthy to be called a Torch Bearer. I'm not a born leader, like Agony is." There was a world of unexpressed longing in her voice.

Nyoda thought seriously about the matter. Oh-Pshaw was certainly humble and unassuming enough, always kind and sweet and obliging, always willing to take any part in anything that was assigned her, but did she have the grit and backbone, the force of character which Nyoda considered necessary qualifications for a Torch Bearer? As yet she did not know.

The subject was dropped. The circle sat in a silence for a moment. Each one of the Torch Bearers in that circle was humbly wondering what Nyoda had ever seen in her to cause her to single her out for the honor. And each one became very sober as she thought about it and wondered if she had come up to Nyoda's expectations.

The fire was burning low and the embers sent only a feeble glow around the Council Rock. Behind them the forest stretched darkly away, and in the stillness that brooded over them the sound of the lapping water beneath came up with a curious distinctness. Oh-Pshaw shuddered as she heard it and drew closer to the fire.

"What's the matter, are you cold?" asked Nyoda.

"I hate the sound of running water!" exclaimed Oh-Pshaw. "It fairly makes my blood curdle. It's been so ever since I can remember. I hate it in daylight, but at night it makes my hair stand on end! If I were out here alone with it I'd simply go insane!"

"Why, how queer!" said Sahwah, unable to understand how anyone could be afraid of her beloved element, and the others laughed, too, thinking that Oh-Pshaw was only exaggerating, as most girls do over their little peculiarities.

"It *is* queer," said Agony, "because water doesn't affect me a bit like that. I love to hear it, day or night. But it's been that way with Oh-Pshaw ever since she was little. I can remember once when we were about five years old she had spasms because our nurse left us alone in the bathtub when the water was running in. She can't even stand it to hear the water running down the eave spouts during a heavy shower."

The Winnebagos all laughed again at this queer "bete noir" of Oh-Pshaw's, all but Nyoda. She knew something which the girls did not, and which neither Agony nor Oh-Pshaw herself knew, something which had been told her by Grandmother Wing in one of her talks with Nyoda. That was that when Oh-Pshaw was a baby only three months old she had been taken out in a sailboat by her father and mother on the river which ran through Oakwood. A squall came up and the boat capsized and all three were thrown into the wildly rolling river. They were promptly rescued by a nearby launch, all unhurt, but the moaning, gurgling sound of the water had stamped itself indelibly on Oh-Pshaw's tiny brain and she would never again be able to hear that gurgling noise without a sensation of horror. During her infancy, even the sound of water gurgling out of a bottle was sufficient to throw her into spasms. She had never been told about the accident, in the hope that she would outgrow the shock and get over the fear, but she had never outgrown it. She no longer had spasms when she heard water gurgling, but the sound chilled her to the very marrow of her bones, and she never went alone, even in daylight, past the river.

Nyoda knew how real this fear was and sympathized deeply with her, although she pretended to make light of it, as the others did. Nyoda and the Winnebagos loved to sit in the silence of the woods when the fire burned low and listen to the murmuring of the water, but for Oh-Pshaw's sake they must not do it to-night.

"Come, girls," Nyoda called cheerily, "'Fire's gwine out,' time to sing 'Mammy Moon' and then go home."

She poked the last embers of the fire into a little blaze, and the light and the lively measures of the song took Oh-Pshaw's mind off the gurgling water.

"Cross my heart, Mammy Moon,
Termorrer I'll be an angel coon,
I'll be a chile dat'll make you smile,
Good---o-l-e Mam-my M-o-o-n!"

The circle all lay down with their heads on each other's shoulders in the drowsy attitude with which the song closes, and then Gladys's clear voice rose in the melody of the Camp Fire Girls' own lullaby, sung to the music of an Ojibway love song:

"In the still night, far, far below,
The drowsy wavelets come and go,
They weave a dream spell round Wohelo.

"Mid the pine trees, the long night through,
The wandering breezes croon to you,
They breathe a sleep charm of mist and dew.

"Heaven broods o'er you with stars aglow,
The hearts of Night is beating low,
Wokanda watches o'er Wohelo.
Wokanda watches o'er Wohelo!"

Then the last ember burned out into darkness and with the aid of their little bug lights they stole home through the shadowy woods; Sahwah carrying Many Eyes in her arms and confident she was a winner; Agony filled with a great elation because her ambition to become a Torch Bearer would soon be realized; Oh-Pshaw sadly wishing she were a born leader like her sister; and Nyoda, walking with them, guessed what was in the mind of each and her heart went out to them in tender love as the heart of a shepherd goes out to his sheep.

CHAPTER XI

THE FURTHER CAREER OF MANY EYES

"What a grand day, and the wind just right," exulted Sahwah on Saturday noon as the Winnebagos were hastening home from military drill. "It was just made for flying kites."

"Are Slim and the Captain coming?" asked Hinpoha.

"They said they were," replied Sahwah.

"Father's coming, too," said Agony. "He came home this morning. He said he would get Mr. Prince to come along with him."

"Oh, dear, I do hope we win, with *him* there!" said Hinpoha. "But I don't see how Many Eyes can help winning, with the four leaf clover and all the good luck signs tied to her tail," she finished confidently. Hinpoha believed firmly in the potency of her charms.

But alas for charms and good luck signs! Maybe the Fates stand in awe of them, but they are powerless in the case of a goat. The Winnebagos reached home just in time to see Many Eyes, impaled on Kaiser Bill's horns, borne swiftly through the garden toward the stable. Sahwah shrieked and darted in pursuit, whereupon the Kaiser collided with a tree and drove his whole head and shoulders through the paper form of Many Eyes and splintered her ribs like toothpicks. Then he dashed round and round the garden at top speed, scattering bits of her tail in his wake. By the time he had finally been subdued with an open umbrella there was not enough left of Many Eyes to know that she had ever been a kite.

The Winnebagos stood dumb with dismay and Sahwah nearly strangled with mingled rage and disappointment.

"We're finished, as far as the contest is concerned," said Agony gloomily.

Sahwah turned her back sharply and winked her eyes hard to keep the tears from falling. She had worked *so* hard to build Many Eyes, and here was all her work gone for nothing, all on account of that fiendish goat!

"Somebody will have to go and tell the Scouts that we withdraw our entry, I suppose," said Migwan.

"Yes, and maybe they won't believe that the goat smashed it," said Agony darkly. "Maybe they'll think we fell down on making a kite, or got cold feet or something."

Sahwah's eyes flashed and she whirled around fiercely, galvanized into action by Agony's words. "That Scout I was talking to was so sure we couldn't make a kite, and I was just aching to show him!" she said with tragic emphasis. Then resolution kindled in her eyes. "I said we were going into that contest, and we *are*! They'll never get a chance to say we backed down! I'm going to make another kite!"

"Oh, Sahwah, there isn't time," said Hinpoha hopelessly. "It's twelve o'clock already and the contest starts at two."

"Two hours!" replied Sahwah. "I can make one in two hours."

"But you haven't had your lunch-----" began Hinpoha.

"Lunch!" exclaimed Sahwah scornfully. "Who wants any lunch? I'm going to build another kite!"

She sped into the house and in a few moments was busy nailing together another frame while the rest of the Winnebagos stood around and handed her tacks, paper, paste, and everything as she needed it. By half past one another Primitive Woman had been evolved by her flying fingers, Migwan and Gladys hastily constructing the tail while Sahwah made the kite proper.

"I believe I'd have time to paint a face on her," said Hinpoha. She seized her brush and put in an eye with rapid strokes. The clock chimed a quarter to two and Sahwah started up nervously.

"There isn't time to do any more, Hinnpoha," she said. "We'll just have time to get there now. She'll just have to go as she is."

"But can you call her Many Eyes if she only has one eye?" objected Hinpoha.

"Never mind what we call her," said Sahwah. "She's a kite, and that's all she needs to be. Call her One Eye if you like. What have you put in her tail?"

"Some of those little sample bags of salt," replied Migwan. "They were the only things we could find to put in as weights."

"Salt's bad luck!" wailed Hinpoha. "Oh, whatever did you take salt for?"

"Too late to change now," said Sahwah.

Agony looked scornfully at the new edition of Many Eyes. "For goodness' sake, you aren't going to enter that thing in the contest?" she exclaimed when she saw it. "Why, it looks perfectly *crazy*. Everybody will laugh at it. I'd rather stay out of the contest than enter such a looking kite. It looks like a scarecrow! For goodness' sake, don't enter *that!*"

Sahwah had to admit that the new Many Eyes *was* a rather laughable object, with her one eye and her miscellaneous tail and her one arm covered with yellow paper where the brown had given out.

"I don't care *what she looks like, she'll fly*," said Sahwah stoutly.

"Well, *I* care what she looks like," returned Agony. "I tell you everybody will laugh at us and our one-eyed kite."

"Let them laugh," retorted Sahwah, "I don't care."

"Oh, come on," said Migwan good-naturedly, "stop arguing about it. If we're going into the contest we'll have to get there pretty soon. We won't win, of course, but we'll show the boys that we're game, anyway. Like the 'poor, benighted Hindoo,' we'll 'do the best we *kin* do!' Be a sport, Agony, and come on."

Sahwah gathered up her kite in her arms and started for the door. Going through the hall she knocked Hinpoha's little purse mirror from the table and smashed it all to bits. Hinpoha was aghast. "Bad luck again!" she wailed.

"Never mind, 'Poha, I'll buy you another mirror," said Sahwah. "Just leave the pieces, I'll sweep them up when I come back."

Agony scolded about the crazy-looking kite all the way to Commons Field and Hinpoha resignedly accepted the fact that luck was against them, and they might as well not enter the contest. To all of their remarks Sahwah paid no heed, stubbornly keeping her determination to enter her beloved kite.

"We've got to be sports now and not back down," was the only thing she would say.

"Yes," said Migwan, "remember---"

"'Tis better to have flown and lost
Than never to have flown at all!"

The other entries had already arrived on the scene when the Winnebagos got there, and a good many of the Oakwood boys and girls had assembled to watch the contest. Commons Field was a five-acre lot running down to the river on the eastern side of the town, used as baseball field, footfall field, and general sporting grounds. It was a sort of natural amphitheatre, for a grassy hill curved around two sides of it, making an ideal place for the spectators to sit and watch what was going on below.

Lists of the entries in the contest had been posted on various trees.

GREAT KITE FLYING CONTEST

Entries

VICTORY BIRD.....Troop No. 1 Boy Scouts
SKYSCRAPER.....Troop No. 2 Boy Scouts
MIKADO II.....Troop No. 3 Boy Scouts
SAMMY BOY.....St. Andrew's League
AMERICAN EAGLE.....Sunday School Association
MANY EYES.....Winnebago Camp Fire Girls

"How graciously they put us at the end of the list," remarked Sahwah.

The Captain and Slim were there waiting for them and looked at Many Eyes critically, but they forebore to laugh at her. Sahwah felt as though she would explode if *they* made fun of her. But they made no disparaging remarks, although they both felt dubious about the flying qualities of a kite in the shape of a Primitive Woman. However, they were game and promised to shout for her with all their might.

The Scout who had taken Sahwah's entry that day under the tree came strolling over, curious to see what kind of a kite she had produced.

"Ho, ho!" he scoffed. "What kind of a kite do you call that? That's nothing but a paper doll. That's just the kind of a kite you'd expect a girl to make. Now when you're making a kite, you want to make a *kite*, not a paper doll! And what did you go and paint that one eye on there for and nothing else, and then enter her as *Many Eyes*?"

Sahwah forbore to reply, and walked away, shielding her poor darling with her body against the curious stares and comments of the other contestants. Mr. Wing was sympathetic when he heard of the tragic fate of the original Many Eyes and did not laugh at her hopscotch successor, but the artist, who was with him, laughed uncontrollably, which hurt Sahwah's feelings and increased the slight antagonism she already had toward him. So she walked away from him, too, and took her place with the contestants, who were forming in a line in the field. All around her she heard amused comments passed upon the shape of No. 6 entry; everybody called it the "paper doll." In height and breadth it conformed to the prescribed measurements laid down by the rules of the contest, but it did look so odd for a kite to have a head and arms and legs! All the other entries were the regulation kite shape. Victory Bird and American Eagle had pictures of eagles with outstretched wings pasted upon them. The whistle blew and the kites were launched in air and immediately the sky was split with the shouts of the various rooters.

"VICTORY BIRD! VICTORY BIRD! VICTORY BIRD!"

"SAMMY BOY! SAMMY BOY! SAMMY BOY!"

"SKYSCRAPER! SKYSCRAPER! SKYSCRAPER!"

In the midst of the din came the feebler, but stanch cheer of the Winnebagos. Nyoda noticed that Agony did not cheer for Many Eyes; she had slipped away from the Winnebagos and stood by herself a few paces off, trying to look like a disinterested spectator.

"She won't cheer for Many Eyes because she's ashamed of her and doesn't want people to know she's her entry!" was the painful thought that came into Nyoda's mind.

The rest of the Winnebagos stood gamely together and shrieked for their entry at the tops of their voices. Slim and the Captain stood by them loyally and made as much racket as they could.

The ripple of amusement that had caused Agony so much chagrin when the "paper doll" began her flight soon changed to astonished applause, for Many Eyes won in a walk! Straight up she soared, "just like an angel," as Sahwah described it afterwards, tugging so hard on her leash that the stick upon which the string was wound spun around in Sahwah's hand like a bobbin and it was all she could do to hold on to it. Once she got started she left all the others far behind. As Slim said, she "made them look like a row of stationary wash tubs."

Sammy Boy and the Skyscraper got their tails twisted and came to earth in a tangled mass; American Eagle was top heavy and flopped around in circles and never rose higher than fifty feet, Mikado went up steadily but slowly, straining at its weighted tail; and Victory Bird, whom everybody expected to win, came a close second, and that was all. Many Eyes got to the end of her string first and danced triumphantly about in the air, several yards above Victory Bird. With everything dead set against her, broken looking glass, salt weights, only one eye, and not a single good luck symbol on her anywhere she had come out first in spite of it all!

Then the Winnebagos nearly split their throats cheering, and Agony, who had slipped back to them, cheered louder than all the rest, advertising to all within earshot that she was a Winnebago and belonged to the winning entry.

"And to think," marveled Hinpoha, "that with all her lucky symbols, the other Many Eyes came to grief, and this one won without a single thing to help her! I'll never have faith in good and bad luck signs again!"

The Scout who had scoffed at Many Eyes before the contest came around afterward and looked her over thoughtfully, and discussed her construction in a decidedly respectful tone with Sahwah.

"Now, can a girl design a kite?" asked Sahwah triumphantly.

"I guess she can," admitted the Scout as graciously as he could under the circumstances. He was the one who had designed Victory Bird and it was hard for him to admit that he had been beaten by a girl.

"But then, you're a Camp Fire Girl," he added, as if it were not so much of a defeat to be beaten by a Camp Fire Girl as by an ordinary girl.

"But what did you put the one eye on her for?" he finished curiously.

"So she could see where she was going," replied Sahwah gravely.

"But why didn't you put *two* eyes in her?" persisted the Scout.

"Because she only needed one to see to get ahead of *your* kites," answered Sahwah, and felt that her triumph was complete.

After the contest was over the Winnebagos went out rowing on the river with Mr. Wing and the artist and Slim and the Captain. Oh-Pshaw wouldn't go, nothing would ever induce her to go rowing, so Nyoda stayed out with her while the rest went. Slim and the Captain had a private squabble as to which one should have Hinpoha in his boat and while they were squabbling she got into the boat with the artist, so the Captain solaced himself with Sahwah and Agony, and Slim took Gladys and Veronica. Migwan got into the boat with Mr. Wing, an arrangement which pleased them both, for Migwan thought Mr. Wing the most charming man in the world, and he was very fond of the sweet, Madonna-faced girl

with the beautiful, thoughtful eyes and the intellectual forehead.

"Who's the nervy party with the chin whiskers that's cabbaged Hinpoha?" asked the Captain of Sahwah, scowling crossly after the leading boat, which was already drawing away from the rest of the party.

"He's an artist, his name is Prince," replied Sahwah. "He's a great friend of Agony's father."

"Is he a great friend of Hinpoha's, too?" demanded the Captain.

"She thinks he's the most wonderful man she ever met," replied Sahwah.

The Captain scowled again, and caught a crab, showering Sahwah and Agony with drops from his oar. "Excuse me!" he exclaimed, disgusted with himself. "Oh, hang it all, anyway!" This last was uttered under his breath, but Sahwah's sharp ear heard it. "Do *you* think he's so wonderful?" he demanded anxiously. The Captain had a vast respect for Sahwah's opinion in most matters.

"I don't like him at all!" Sahwah burst out vehemently. "He's always smiling, and all I can think of is a grinning hyena!" Sahwah spoke with unnecessary vigor, but the remembrance of how he had laughed at Many Eyes still rankled in her bosom.

"Why, Sahwah!" exclaimed Agony in a shocked tone. "How can you say such a thing? I think he's perfectly wonderful," she added. "So polished, and such charming manners."

Here Sahwah created a diversion by dropping her hat overboard, and the artist was forgotten in the exciting business of rescuing it from the swiftly running current.

Hinpoha, beside herself with joy at the victory of Many Eyes, was boasting to the artist what a wonderful group the Winnebagos were.

"And that's not all," she said, as she finished the tale of their numerous achievements on land and water, "we've got a real live baroness in our group!"

"Indeed!" said the artist, nearly dropping his oar in his surprise. "Which one is it?"

"Veronica," replied Hinpoha, gratified at the impression this statement had made upon her listener, and then she launched into a detailed account of Veronica's entire history, dwelling on the part where Veronica had played for the prince.

It was not until she was tucked into bed that night and was just dropping off to sleep that she remembered her promise not to tell anyone about Veronica. "But it was perfectly all right to tell *him*" she said to herself, "he was so interested and so sympathetic." And she dropped off to sleep with never a qualm of conscience about her broken promise.

CHAPTER XII

THE COURT MARTIAL OF THE KAISER

"Gee, ain't it fierce, we ain't got no flag to fight this here Revolution with!" Agony, carrying a baseball bat at "shoulder arms," paced slowly back and forth across the attic in the Wing home with an exaggerated military stride. "Is *that* loud enough, Nyoda?" she asked.

"Yes, your voice is all right," approved Nyoda, jabbing a pin into the large felt hat which she was transferring into a tricorn, "but don't kick your feet straight up in front of you that way. The American army didn't goose-step, remember. Try it again. There, that's better.

"Now, Second Soldier, your little speech, and remember to salute when you're through."

Oh-Pshaw, similarly outfitted as to firearms, added her bit to the drama which was unfolding under Nyoda's direction.

"Now we'll do it with the scenery," announced Nyoda. "Come on, scenery, all up! Here, Trees, you stand here," pushing Hinpoha into place at one side of the landscape, "and More Trees, you get over on the other side. Who is More Trees? Oh, Migwan. All right, you two stand there and sway gently in the breeze. Where are the Guns? Oh, here you are, Sahwah. And the rest of the Guns, that's you, Veronica. Here, you Guns, stack yourselves against Trees."

Sahwah and Veronica inclined toward each other at a precarious angle and leaned against Trees. Trees promptly doubled up and clapped both her hands over the pit of her stomach, and Guns, losing their balance, fell in a heap on the floor.

"What's the matter?" demanded Nyoda.

"Oooo-oo-oo-oh!" giggled Trees. "Sahwah tickled my ribs!"

"Try it again," directed Nyoda, assisting Guns to rise from the floor and stacking them against an invulnerable spot on Trees.

"Now, where's the Moon?"

"Gone downstairs to get a paintbrush," replied More Trees.

"What'll Moon rise on?" asked Nyoda, knitting her brows in thought.

"Take the piano stool," suggested the First Soldier, leaning on his weapon in a picturesque attitude.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Nyoda. "Bring up the piano stool!" she shouted down the stairway, and a few minutes later the Moon came into view, carrying her rising power in one hand, a bottle of India ink in the other, a number of sheets of cardboard under her arm and a paintbrush held crosswise in her mouth.

"Gracious, if you'd ever slipped coming up the stairs!" exclaimed the Second Soldier, springing forward to take the bottle of ink out of the hand of the Moon.

"Now Moon, you rise behind More Trees," ordered Nyoda, setting the piano stool behind Migwan.

"How does a moon rise, anyway?" asked Gladys in perplexity.

"Oh, begin by crouching on the piano stool, and then straighten up gradually to a standing position over Migwan's shoulder," answered Nyoda. "Now then! 'Curtain rises. Scene shows camp of the American army at the time of the Revolution. Trees on left, more trees on right, guns stacked against trees. Moon rises,' All right, Moon, rise!"

Gladys rose shakily to a standing position, her hand on the shoulder of More Trees.

"Now beam over the trees, Moon."

Moon did her best to beam and grinned from ear to ear; Guns howled with laughter; the piano stool began to turn; Moon clutched wildly at More Trees and went down with a crash on the floor.

"Eclipse of the Moon," laughed Nyoda, rushing to the aid of the fallen one.

"Let somebody else be the Moon," declared Gladys, when she had been restored to the perpendicular, viewing the shaky stool with disfavor. "Let Sahwah be it, she's more of an acrobat."

"You *have* to be the Moon because you've got light hair," replied Nyoda in a tone of finality. "You'll just have to *manage* so the stool doesn't turn, that's all. Try it again."

Moon rose over the trees and accomplished the difficult feat of holding the stool still and beaming at the same time with a fair degree of success, and the rehearsal began.

"Oh-Pshaw, you're forgetting to salute!" called Nyoda when Second Soldier had finished his speech. "There, that's all right, now don't forget to do it the next time. Now you get behind the Moon and hold her up through the next scene. She's wobbling again. What comes next? Oh, yes, here's where I come in."

Throwing down her prompting book and setting the partially cocked hat upon her head, Nyoda made a flourishing entrance upon the stage as the Father of her Country, and the second touching scene of the drama was enacted, in which George is informed by the sentry that "we ain't got no flag to fight this here Revolution with," and soothingly promises to "see Betsy." Just as George was delivering his reassuring promise Trees felt a fly walking across her nose and sneezed a tremendous sneeze, sending Guns sprawling upon the floor.

"Gracious, Hinpoha, can't you hold still a *minute*?" sighed Nyoda, pushing the hat up from her left eye where it had hung ever since she had knocked it crooked returning the sentry's salute. "And who's going to work our 'Quick Curtain' there?"

"Oh, either Slim or the Captain can draw the curtain for us," said Hinpoha.

"But we want it all to be a surprise for them," Sahwah reminded her. "They're not supposed to know anything about it."

"Well, grandmother can draw the curtain, then," said Agony.

"But she's supposed to be in the audience, too," objected Oh-Pshaw.

"Why, *you* can draw the curtain, you're not doing anything at the end of this scene!" exclaimed Nyoda triumphantly to Oh-Pshaw. "Second Soldier goes out after his one speech and doesn't come on again."

"I'm a rocking chair in the last scene, though," Oh-Pshaw reminded her.

Nyoda thought deeply for a moment. "We'll have to do without that one rocking chair in the last act. You'll have to draw the curtain. No show is complete without a quick curtain at the end. How can we have curtain calls without a curtain? Anyway, we don't need three rocking chairs, two are plenty."

So Oh-Pshaw good-naturedly shifted her role from rocking chair to curtain puller.

"Next scene, home of Betsy Ross," proclaimed Nyoda. "Trees, you'll have to turn into a chair in this scene, and More Trees, you turn into another chair. Guns, you will become a spinet and a spinning wheel respectively, and Moon, you'll turn into a table. First Soldier, you'll become Betsy Ross. Now then! All the stage settings get in place for the last scene!"

The two chairs solemnly began to rock back and forth on their heels, causing the Spinning Wheel to go off into fits of uncontrollable laughter, and Betsy Ross, hearing George's knock, rose to answer it, but, catching sight of the two rocking chairs, promptly doubled up on the floor instead of letting George in.

"I can't do anything if they're going to rock," gasped Betsy.

"You'll *have* to get used to it," said Nyoda emphatically. "We want those rocking chairs, they're the funniest part of the show. Don't look at them if you can't keep a straight face. Now start again. Where's your baby? Here, take this towel for a baby until you can find a doll.

"Now, remember, when I come in you say 'Hello, George,' in a very familiar tone, and when I say, 'Gee, ain't it fierce, we ain't go no flag to fight this here Revolution with,' you say, 'I know, ain't it fierce! Here, you hold the baby and I'll make one.' Then you give me the baby and I walk up and down while you sew, and the baby screams all the while---Oh-Pshaw, you'll have to make the noise for the baby behind the scenes. Now, all ready!"

George came in, with a yardstick tied around his waist for a sword, and made a deep bow which made the spinet giggle violently. "Gee, ain't it fierce---! Stop laughing, Sahwah, remember you're the scenery!"

Sahwah lasted until the towel baby was laid in the arms of the Commander-in-Chief, and Oh-Pshaw, trying to imitate the noise of a crying baby behind the scenes, emitted a series of yelps which were harrowingly suggestive of a large yellow dog going through the meat chopper. It was too much for the rest of the scenery; the rocking chair howled, the spinning wheel choked, the table wept into her handkerchief, and even George's composure forsook him and he and Betsy fell up against each other and shouted.

"Good gracious, Oh-Pshaw, a baby doesn't cry like that! It makes a wailing noise in a high key. Try it again, now."

Oh-Pshaw amended her vocal efforts so that the results were not fatal, and the historical First Edition of the Stars and Stripes proceeded without further mishap.

"Where's the flag I'm to hold up when it's done?" demanded Betsy.

"Who brought the flag along?" asked Nyoda.

The spinet suddenly clapped a hand to her brow. "I left it on the porch at Carver House!" she exclaimed. "I was going to bring it along with the rest of the things, and then I forgot it. Shall I go and get it?"

"Never mind," said Nyoda, "we'll get along without it now and bring it along when we come over to-night. Come on, now, go through the whole thing once more, and then we're finished. Oh-Pshaw, while you're not on the stage, you make the signs for the scenery, TREES, MORE TREES, GUNS---make two signs for Guns---MOON, *etc.*, and on the other side paint CHAIR, TABLE, SPINNING WHEEL, SPINET, *etc.*, so all the scenery will have to do is turn the signs around on themselves when they change from the first to the second scenes."

All the above commotion was in preparation for the party which Agony and Oh-Pshaw were giving that night in honor of Slim's birthday. The birthday was already past, it is true, but it was still recent enough to make it a legitimate excuse for a party. The Winnebagos, as usual, could not have a party without some select private theatricals in honor of the occasion.

The rehearsal over, Nyoda and the Winnebagos wended their way back to Carver House to get ready for the evening.

"Kaiser Bill's out!" exclaimed Sahwah, as they approached the house. "I just saw him jump the hedge and run around the side of the house with something red in his mouth."

"The cover of the porch table!" exclaimed Nyoda. "Run, head him off, quick!"

They sped into the yard and round the side of the house as the sportive Kaiser doubled in his tracks and missed them by an inch.

"Oh, he's got the flag!" shrieked Sahwah. "I left it on the porch! Get it! Get it! He's got it half eaten!" They gave strenuous chase, but the wily Capricorn, mischief sparkling in his wicked eyes, eluded them again and again, and each time they passed him there was less of the flag hanging out of his mouth. Not until the last shred was gulped down did he suffer himself to be cowed by the persistent umbrella in Nyoda's hand, and then he came to a stand in a triumphant attitude, and on his face was the satisfied expression of an epicure who has just discovered a rare new dainty to tickle his palate.

The Winnebagos looked at each other and were speechless with horror. Kaiser Bill had eaten up the American flag!

Nyoda recovered herself first, and the Winnebagos saw her in one of her rare moods of anger.

"This is the last straw!" she exclaimed indignantly. "He's chewed up two sofa pillows and a twelve-dollar hammock and no end of books; he destroyed Sahwah's kite last week; he's broken the windows in the greenhouse three or four times; he's ruined large numbers of valuable plants; and still I bore with him patiently for old Hercules' sake. But I won't stand it any longer. I'm tired of being kept in hot water by that fiendish old goat. He's the terror of the neighbors, and I live in hourly expectation of damage suits that will ruin me. Now I've reached the limit of endurance. Either that goat leaves Carver House or I do, and as Carver House belongs to me and Kaiser Bill doesn't, I reckon he'll be the one to go."

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Sahwah.

"Oh, give him away, or sell him---anything," replied Nyoda.

"Hercules, come here!" she called, as she spied a kinky white head bobbing around in the barnyard.

Hercules approached with a painfully slow, shuffling gait. "What is it, Mis' Elizabeth?" he inquired mildly, eyeing his mistress with affection in his look.

"Hercules," said Nyoda crisply, "we're going to get rid of that goat."

"What's 'at ol' goat bin a-doin', honey?" quavered Hercules anxiously.

"He's eaten up the American flag!" replied Nyoda in an outraged tone. "This is positively the last straw. I put up with several hundred dollars' worth of damage about the place, but this is too much. Do you realize what he's done? *He's*

eaten up the American flag!"

"Why-e-e-e-e!" exclaimed Hercules, and then, "Lord a-massy! Kaiser Bill," he remarked reproachfully, "ain't I done fetched you up no better'n 'at?"

"Do you know of anyone who would take him?" asked Nyoda.

The old man considered, with his head in his hands. "Oh, Mis' Elizabeth, you-all ain't goin' ter give dat goat away?" he broke out pleadingly. "'At goat's lived here all his life, deed he has, Mis' Elizabeth, an' he wouldn' feel to home nowheres else!"

But for once Nyoda stood her ground and refused to be cajoled.

"Mis' Elizabeth," said old Hercules solemnly, when all pleading had been in vain, "you-all ain' goin' ter give 'at goat away, because you-all *can't* give him away! Ain't anybody *livin'* 'at can give dat goat away! He'd come back just as fast as you'd give him away! 'At ol' Kaiser's a mighty foxy goat. Ain't no door bin *invented* 'at *he* can't break down!"

The old man's voice quavered triumphantly, and he winked at the goat solemnly. Nyoda had a mental vision of Kaiser Bill putting on a Return from Elba act every day in the future, and her resolution took a sudden hardy turn.

"You're right," she said. "It wouldn't do any good to give him away. He'd come back. The only way to get rid of him is to kill him. Then we'll be sure he can't come back."

Hercules looked at her unbelievably, and shook his head.

"I mean it," repeated Nyoda. "I'm going to get rid of that goat."

She stood still, waiting for the torrent of dissuading argument that would presently come from Hercules' lips, intending to cut it short, but the flow never came. Just when Hercules had his mouth open to begin there came a sudden earthquake shock from behind, and he found himself sitting in a flower bed a dozen feet away, rubbing his bruised knees and struggling to regain his breath. His first impression was that he had been run over by a locomotive.

When he could finally be persuaded that Kaiser Bill, base and ungrateful animal, had rewarded his championship of him by deliberately assaulting him with the full force of his concrete forehead, his heart was broken, and he mutely bowed to the decision of the judge.

"'T's all one ter me now," he said sadly. "Kaiser Bill done turn agin' ol' Hercules; ol' Hercules' heart broke now. Don' care whether you kill him er not. 'T's all one ter me."

"We'll have a Court Martial," announced Sahwah.

The Court Martial duly sat, and in a most formal manner Kaiser Bill was tried and convicted of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and of traitorously destroying the American flag, and was sentenced to be shot at sunrise the next morning.

"Who's going to shoot him?" asked Hinpoha.

"Oh, we'll get Slim and the Captain to do it," replied Sahwah.

With the death sentence hanging over his head, the Kaiser was led away to await his execution.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PARTY

Dinner hour was over in Oakwood and the evening life of the stately old town was beginning to stir when Mr. Wing stepped off the train and walked briskly through the softly falling twilight toward his home. Not far from the station he met the artist, Eugene Prince, strolling about admiring the landscape, and hailed him cordially. "I've just come home on a flying trip over night," he explained. "Have to go to Washington in the morning. I wonder if the folks are at home; I should have telephoned them I was coming, I suppose." Mr. Wing seemed very much elated about something.

"How's the big case coming?" asked the artist. He had always been such a ready listener while Mr. Wing expressed his various theories about the matter and showed such a lively interest that Mr. Wing had gotten into the habit of talking about it to him by the hour and listening to him express *his* theories.

Now when the artist mentioned the big case Mr. Wing could not conceal his triumph, for *his* theory had been right after all, and the artist's had been wrong. "It's exactly what I expected," he said jubilantly, and spoke in a low, confidential tone for some minutes.

The artist whistled in blank surprise.

The two men passed up the street, talking in low tones. "Come up to the house with me," said Mr. Wing presently, "and I'll show you---Hello, what's this?"

A creaking rumble behind them made them start and turn around, and a singular sight greeted their eyes. Down the street puffed an immensely fat negro woman clad in a calico wrapper and a bright red turban, pushing a wheelbarrow in which sat a negro baby somewhat larger than its mammy. In the wheelbarrow beside the baby stood a feeding bottle of gigantic proportions, being in very truth a three-gallon flask designed to hold a solution to spray trees with; six feet of garden hose constituted the tube, and a black rubber diving cap at the upper end of it completed the feeding apparatus.

"*Pour l'amour de Mique!*" laughed Mr. Wing, as the unique outfit rumbled by. "What on earth do you suppose *that* is?" They followed the progress of the billowing mother and her husky infant with amused eyes, and at the corner of the street she attempted to turn the barrow, ran into a stone, upset the barrow and spilled the infant on the ground. The infant immediately sprang up, clutching the Gargantuan feeding bottle, and berated his mother in emphatic terms, delivered in a deep bass voice, addressing her as "Captain." "Look out, you'll break the bottle, dumping the wheelbarrow over like that," he remarked warningly. The old mammy stooped over to readjust him in the barrow and as she did so several feet of masculine garments became visible under her short skirt.

"Minstrel show in town," remarked Mr. Wing with another laugh of amusement. His amusement turned to surprise when the picturesque pair preceded him up the street and turned in at his own yard. The house was lighted from one end to the other; groups of young people were visible everywhere, on the porches, on the lawn, in the doorways.

"Seems to be a party going on here," remarked Mr. Wing.

"Father!" exclaimed a voice from the crowd, and Agony darted forward to embrace him. "Why didn't you tell us you were coming? You're just in time for the party."

Mr. Wing greeted the guests affably and after a short interval escaped with the artist to his study on the second floor, where they spent an hour in close consultation behind a locked door.

"Now let's go down and look in on the party," said Mr. Wing, locking a package of letters carefully into a small drawer in his desk. Before going down he went to his own room and changed to a suit of white flannels in honor of the occasion.

As he was finally making for the stairway he met Veronica Lehar in the upstairs hall. "May I use the telephone in the study?" she asked.

"Certainly," he replied, and went in and turned the light on for her and then went on downstairs.

Shouts of laughter filled the air; the negro mammy and the gigantic infant, together with the wheelbarrow and the feeding bottle, were holding the stage at the end of the spacious sitting room. Slim was being given his birthday presents and was surrounded with nonsensical articles of every kind--toys, rattles, all-day suckers, and so forth, and was convulsing the crowd with his antics.

The merriment went on until somebody called for Veronica to play on her violin and she came downstairs with her violin in her hands. Then a hush fell on the crowd, and the merrymakers listened, spellbound and dreamy-eyed, to the strains which the passionate-eyed little Hungarian girl drew from the fiddle resting so caressingly in the hollow of her shoulder.

It was a plaintive, melancholy melody she played first, throbbing with unsatisfied longing and quivering with pain and heartbreak. Sahwah shivered and thought of ice cold rain drops falling on long dead leaves, and the restless unhappiness seized upon her again. The melody wandered on, and in its weird minor thirds there seemed to be all the anguish of an oppressed people, hopeless of release from bondage; condemned to toil in darkness forever.

Then a new note crept into the music, a note of protest, of rebellion. Fury took the place of hopelessness; dumb resignation gave way to angry stirrings. Fiercely the storm raged for a moment, and then subsided into feeble murmurs, and flickered out into hopelessness again, blacker and deeper than before. Then came flight, sudden and headlong, hurried and confused; and days of wandering by land and sea, hours of loneliness and homesickness, of mingled hope and fear, of faith and perplexity, ending in a magnificent hymn of thanksgiving and praise for deliverance. It made Sahwah think of the persecuted Jews in Russia, fleeing from a massacre and coming to America for refuge.

But now the music had taken a gayer, brighter turn. Everywhere there was the hum of industry, a contented sound like the buzzing of bees intent upon gathering honey. Songs of happiness rose on every side, mingled with the sound of joyful feet passing in a gay dance. The music took on an irresistible lilt; the feet of the listeners itched to join in the measure and tapped out the time involuntarily.

Suddenly the dance turned into marching, the earth resounded with the tramp, tramp of advancing feet, the music became a martial strain; it stirred the blood to fever heat and set the pulses leaping madly. Louder and more triumphant swelled the strain, louder came the tramp of the victorious armies following in the wake of trumpets, until the whole earth seemed to mingle its voice in one great shout of victory.

Without knowing it the listeners were on their feet, clutching each other with tense fingers, their eyes blurred with tears, their throats aching with emotion, their hearts burning to perform deeds of valor for their country, to fight to the last ditch, to die as heroes for their native land.

They hardly realized when Veronica had stopped playing and slipped quietly out of the room.

"God, what playing!" breathed Mr. Wing to the artist. "Music like that would turn cowards into heroes and heroes into demi-gods; would inspire a wooden dummy to fight to the last ditch for freedom and native land. Daggers and Dirks! What a red-hot little American she is! Why, if a *dead* man heard her play the 'Star Spangled Banner' the way she just played it, he'd rise up to protect his country. Yes, and his very *monument* would shoulder a gun and get into the ranks against the foe!"

Refreshments were brought in and the babel of tongues broke loose again. Everyone asked for Veronica, wanted to sit beside her and tell her what a wonderful genius she was, but she was nowhere to be found. Grandmother Wing came in presently and said that Veronica had slipped out and gone home because she had a sick headache and wanted to be alone.

"She has those headaches so often," said Migwan in a tone of concern. "I wonder if I hadn't better go home after her."

"She said she wanted to be alone," said Nyoda thoughtfully. "She always does, you know, when she has a headache. I don't believe I'd go after her. She'll go right to bed and be all right in the morning."

With many expressions of regret at Veronica's indisposition the boys and girls resumed their frolic.

Slim and the Captain, still in their roles of mammy and pickaninny, walked home with the Winnebagos when the party finally broke up, the pickaninny trundling his own one-wheeled chariot, which was so full of presents there was no room for him.

Nyoda broke the news to them of their appointment as executioners of Kaiser Bill and they accepted the commission gravely. "'Horatius,' quoth the consul, 'as thou sayst, so let it be,'" quoted Slim with a dramatic flourish. "We'll execute your orders and the goat at the same time. But does it take two to speed the fatal ball? Why am I honored thus when here beside me stands the world's champion crack shot, even the great Cicero St. John?"

The Captain suddenly flushed and glared at Slim, but said nothing.

"'Herminius beat his bosom, but never a word he spake,'" quoted Slim, grinning. "You see," he continued, turning to the girls, "the Captain and I were practising shooting at a target once, out in the country, and the Captain came so near the bull's eye that he shot the perch out from under a parrot in a cage fifty feet away. O Mother dear, Jerusalem! You never saw such a surprised bird in all your life!" Slim was overcome by the remembrance, and the Captain grinned feebly at the laughter which the tale invoked.

"Don't you worry, I guess I can shoot a goat all right," said the Captain with some asperity.

"Uttered like a man, Captain," grinned Slim. "'Then out spoke brave Horatius, the Captain of the gate---'"

His flow of nonsense was interrupted by an exclamation of surprise from Nyoda as they reached the front gate. A messenger boy was running up the steps of Carver House just ahead of them.

CHAPTER XIV

NEWS FROM THE FRONT

"Does Mrs. Andrew Sheridan live here?" asked the boy, looking from one to the other.

"Here," replied Nyoda, holding out her hand for the envelope.

"Who can be telegraphing at this time of night?" asked Hinpoha, shot through with a sudden fear that something had happened to her aunt and they were telegraphing to Nyoda about it.

Nyoda stepped into the hall, switched on the light and tore open the envelope. Then she gasped suddenly and sat down on the stair steps with a frightened "Oh-h-h!"

"What is it, Nyoda?" asked the girls, crowding around her in alarm.

She held out the telegram and Gladys took it from her hands and held it up where all could see:

MRS. ANDREW SHERIDAN,

Oakwood, Pa.

Your husband on board *Antares* when she sank in collision off Nova Scotia August first. Now in Good Samaritan Hospital, St. Margaret's, Nova Scotia, probably fatally injured.
Come.

The signature was that of some official of the government.

"Oh-h-h!" cried the Winnebagos in horror, staring, fascinated, at the fatal sheet of paper in their hands. Migwan ran to Nyoda and put her arms around her in silent sympathy; the rest stood still, with shocked, frightened faces.

After a moment of stunned surprise Nyoda rallied herself. "Come," she said, in her usual calm, brisk tones, "I have to make haste. I must go on that early morning train. It goes through here about four. Help me pack, girls."

Recalled to themselves by the quietness of Nyoda's manner the Winnebagos set about helping in their usual efficient way. Hinpoha and Gladys sped to the kitchen to make coffee and sandwiches; Sahwah sped downstairs into the laundry to bring up the freshly ironed clothes; Slim and the Captain went up into the attic to bring down the suitcase and make themselves generally useful; Migwan went to Nyoda's room with her to help her make ready for the journey.

Sahwah was coming up the cellar stairs with a basket of clothes in her hand. Just as she passed the side entry door she heard someone fumbling with the knob on the outside. The knob turned and the door began to open softly. "Who's there?" called Sahwah sharply, switching on the light in the entry and throwing wide the door. There stood Veronica, with her violin under her arm and her hat and coat on. She started back when she saw Sahwah and the two stood looking into each other's eyes. "She hasn't been home, she's still got her violin," was the thought that went through Sahwah's mind.

"I thought you went home with a sick headache from the party," she said in astonishment.

"So did the rest of them," replied Veronica imperturbably.

Their eyes met and held for a second, and it seemed to Sahwah that Veronica looked haggard and haunted.

"Is everybody home?" asked Veronica presently.

"Yes," replied Sahwah, "and, O Veronica---" and she told her the news.

"Oh, poor, poor Nyoda!" cried Veronica, and throwing off her hat and coat she thrust them with her violin into the closet under the stairs and then sped upstairs.

"She didn't have a headache at all, she didn't go home, she went somewhere else," throbbed Sahwah's weary brain. "And whatever she's done, she's scared to death about it," it throbbed on. "Why did she come stealing in the back door that way?"

Worried and perplexed, but still loyal to her promise to say nothing to the others about Veronica, Sahwah went on sorting and carrying up the ironed clothes.

Upstairs Migwan was helping Nyoda get dressed for her journey. Nyoda was still in her George Washington suit, which she had concealed under a long cloak on the way home, and Migwan's hands trembled so with excitement she could hardly take out the endless pins that they had put in with so much fun and laughter a few hours before.

"How did Sherry, happen to be on the ocean?" Nyoda asked wonderingly. "He was in France the last time I heard from him. Why would he be coming to America now?"

Migwan could not answer the question, she could only press her beloved Guardian's hand tight in hers by way of sympathy and then fly back at the pins, which all seemed to be allied against them, for they buried their heads out of sight and thrust their points where Migwan's shaking fingers caught and tore themselves upon them. The suit was off at last and Migwan tucked Nyoda into bed for an hour of rest while she pressed her dark blue silk traveling dress and sewed fresh collars and cuffs into her jacket.

In the next room Veronica was swiftly packing the suitcase. The whole house was filled with confusion and haste. The old portraits on the walls looked down in astonishment at this unwonted turning of night into day, at the lights burning all over the house, from attic to basement, and at the girls running up and downstairs, bumping into each other in their haste and getting more flurried all the time. A smell of coffee pervaded the whole place, and this was soon superseded by the odor of burning toast. In the midst of the confusion the telephone rang and everybody thought someone else was answering it, with the result that nobody answered it and it rang a second time, long and insistently. Sahwah rushed up from the basement; Veronica sped swiftly down from upstairs, followed in a moment by Migwan; Hinpoha hastily snatched the coffee pot off the fire and ran in from the kitchen; Gladys hastened from the pantry; the two boys jumped in from the porch, and at the same moment Nyoda called over the banister and asked if someone would answer the telephone.

Sahwah got there first and snatched down the receiver with a trembling hand while the rest stood expectantly around, fearful of what this midnight message might be. And then after all the call was not for the house at all; the operator had made a wrong connection!

Hinpoha flew back to her toast; Sahwah returned to the basement, limping as she went, having struck her shin against the steps in the hurried trip up. Migwan had pricked her finger when the bell rang, it had startled her so, and a great drop of blood fell on the clean collar, so that she had to rip it out and find another one and sew that in. Then she discovered a button missing and hunted endlessly to find another one to match.

Everything was fixed at last and Migwan ran downstairs to see what was to be done there. Everything was being taken care of, and so, turning off the lights which were blazing unnecessarily in the long parlor, she sank down in a chair to rest a moment. Already the party seemed days in the past---could it be that this was still the same night? A shade flapped in the window, irritating her strained nerves, and she rose hastily and pulled it up. Her hand came in contact with something soft and silky. It was the service flag in the window---the flag that stood for Sherry. Reverently she

straightened it out and stood stroking it with shaking fingers. The dark blue star stood out dimly in the light that shone through the window from the outside and the thought came into her mind that soon it might be replaced by a gold star. Tears came into her eyes; she forced them resolutely back and hastened upstairs to tell Nyoda that her hour was up and she must get up and begin to dress. Nyoda was already up and dressed when she went into the room; she was standing in front of the mirror combing her hair. Migwan hastened forward to assist her, reproaching herself that she hadn't come up sooner.

The blue dress was soon on and adjusted and Migwan pinned the collar while Veronica adjusted the cuffs.

Nyoda was checking off on her fingers the things she must take. "Handkerchiefs---did you get them in?" Veronica nodded.

"Towels, soap case, hairpins, buttonhook?"

"Everything," replied Veronica.

"Slippers, bathrobe---"

"I forgot the slippers!" exclaimed Veronica, and sped after them.

The hall clock chimed half past three and Nyoda started nervously.

"Plenty of time," said Migwan soothingly. "Come downstairs now and drink your coffee and eat something."

Nyoda went downstairs and drank several cups of coffee and forced herself to eat some of the scorched toast, although she was not in the least hungry.

"You'll stay here in the house until I come back, won't you, girls?" she said between sips of coffee. "Ill leave you in full charge. You'll be careful, won't you?"

"Yes, Nyoda," they all promised. "We'll be good and see that nothing happens. Don't worry."

"I'll send you my address as soon as I get there, so you can write me. Remember about lighting the gas stove in the kitchen, Hinpoha, it puffs. The bed linen is in the closet off the front room upstairs."

"Yes, Nyoda, we'll find everything, don't worry."

The long peal of an auto horn sounded outside.

"There's the car," said Sahwah. "The boys got it out of the garage and around the front of the house."

"What time is it?"

"A quarter to four. We'd better start, you have to buy your ticket first. Here, let me take the suitcase."

"Where are my gloves?"

"Here they are," said Migwan, handing them to her.

They passed quickly down the front walk and into the waiting automobile. A swift ride through the quiet streets in the first pale glimmerings of the dawn, and they were in the little station, the only ones waiting for the train.

The Captain strode over to the blackboard while Nyoda went to buy her ticket. "Train's on time," he announced, coming back to the group.

In another minute they heard the whistle in the distance, and then the long train roared in and came to a panting halt. The Captain seized Nyoda's suitcase and jumped aboard with it. Nyoda followed and stood still on the train steps to say good-bye to the Winnebagos crowding around.

"Be good, girlies," she said, smiling bravely at them.

"Oh, Nyoda, *dear* Nyoda! We'll think of you every minute. We'll pray for you and Sherry."

The conductor stood on the platform, watch in hand.

"If you need anything, Nyoda, telegraph and we'll send it"

The conductor dropped his right hand in signal to the engineer, and swung aboard, the wheels began to turn, the Captain leaped down from the other end of the car.

"Good-bye, Nyoda!"

A waving of handkerchiefs on the platform, an answering wave from the car window, and Nyoda was gone. No. 46 had puffed in on time, made its usual five-minute stop, and puffed out on time. But what a difference its coming and departure had made to the Winnebagos! It was all over in such quick time that they hardly had time to draw breath.

They stood on the platform and watched the train out of sight and then turned and climbed up the steps to the street, silent for the most part, with only an occasional exclamation of "What *will* Nyoda do if Sherry dies?"

Then another swift drive through the silent streets, scarcely any lighter than they had been before, and they were back at Carver House, which suddenly seemed empty and dreary with Nyoda gone.

They sat down to the table and ate up the rest of the toast and drank the rest of the coffee; then the boys started back to their tent in the woods, and the Winnebagos, beginning to feel weak and shaky now that the excitement of getting Nyoda ready had passed, went slowly and sadly up the stairs and crept into bed.

Thoroughly worn out with the strenuous evening and the still more strenuous night that followed it, they finally fell asleep, while the sun rose unwelcomed over Carver Hill and the stair clock chimed half past six in vain.

CHAPTER XV

IT NEVER RAINS---

Sahwah wakened with the sound of a bell ringing in her ears. The house was still asleep; the sun was pouring in brightly through the south window of the room. Sahwah wondered idly why the sun was shining in at that window; it always shone in the other window when she wakened in the morning. Then she remembered. It all seemed like a dream; the telegram, the hurried preparations for departure, the swift journey to the station with Nyoda and the return to Carver

House without her. Sahwah was still piecing together the events of the night before when the shrill ring sounded through the house again. It was the front doorbell. Sahwah jumped up and threw on her bathrobe and, yawning widely, ran downstairs.

It was Agony; Agony with a face as pale as a ghost. "What's the matter?" asked Sahwah in consternation, forgetting her own great news at the sight of Agony's expression.

"It's Veronica," Agony burst out breathlessly.

"What's the matter with Veronica?" asked Sahwah in alarm.

"She's been arrested!"

Sahwah's heart thumped queerly and then seemed to stand still at this climax of her forebodings. "What for?" she asked faintly.

Agony came in and sat down on the hall seat "There's so much to tell, I think I'll begin at the beginning," she said, and Sahwah stood still with her eyes fastened on Agony's face apprehensively.

"You remember when you were all over at our house for dinner one night, and papa was home, he told us something about the big case he was working on, the Atterbury case, and he said he suspected that German agents were mixed up in it? Well, yesterday he got hold of some letters that proved it. There was one from a German Prince, Prince Karl Augustus of Hohenburg, to some man in this country, written before the war, promising to pay money to have strikes started and machinery damaged if this country went into the war. This very Atterbury was mentioned in the letter, and it made papa's case complete against him. The letter had gotten into the wrong hands and somebody turned it over to papa. It was so important that papa had to take it to Washington. That's why he came home unexpectedly last night; he planned to go this morning. He brought the letter home with him and locked it in his desk upstairs. This morning a Secret Service agent came out from Philadelphia to go along with papa and papa went to get the letter and it was gone."

"But what has Veronica----"

Agony drew another long breath and hastened on. "Why, papa says that Veronica asked to use the telephone in the study last night, and she was in there a long time alone, and soon afterward she disappeared from the party. The letter was in his desk when she went in there; nobody else went in after her. It looks as though she took it, and the Secret Service man arrested her."

"But I thought Veronica was upstairs in bed!" gasped Sahwah.

"She came over to our house about nine o'clock this morning," said Agony, "and told us about Nyoda's husband being injured and her going away in such a hurry. She was downstairs with me when papa discovered that the letter was gone, and the agent arrested her right away."

Sahwah's head was in a whirl, and she sat down weakly on the stairs. Then she raised her head and said with a flash of spirit, "Veronica never took any letter out of your father's desk! I don't believe it! Whatever would she want with such a thing as that?"

"But," continued Agony, "don't you see? This Prince Karl Augustus of Hohenburg is a friend of hers, she played for him and his wife gave her a ring! She's taken that letter away so it can't be used in the trial to prove that he was connected

with the business!"

"I don't believe it!" said Sahwah flatly. Her blood rose to fighting pitch even while her heart misgave her. "Agony Wing," she raged, "do you think for a moment that Veronica would have anything to do with enemy agents? What if she did know that old prince. She didn't like him. Do you think she'd steal letters for him?"

"It does seem awfully odd," said Agony, "the fuss she always made about wanting to be an American. Papa could hardly believe it of her, either, but the Secret Service man and Mr. Prince are perfectly sure she did it."

"Mr. Prince!" exclaimed Sahwah in wrath. "What's *he* got to do with it?"

"Well, it seems that all along he's been suspicious of her; he didn't think she was sincere when she talked about liking America better than her own country," replied Agony. "He says he isn't surprised at all that this happened; he's been expecting something of the kind. It was he that told papa and the Secret Service man about her having known the prince."

"How did *he* find it out?" demanded Sahwah.

"I don't know, I never told him," declared Agony, bristling as though she thought Sahwah suspected she had told.

"I hate that artist!" Sahwah declared fiercely. "He's a meddling old thing!"

"Well, you can't really blame him for suspecting Veronica," said Agony, lightly, "You see, she's an alien enemy, and-----"

"Agony!" cried Sahwah savagely, "do *you* believe Veronica's a traitor?"

"I hate to think-----" began Agony.

Sahwah came close to her and faced her with blazing eyes. "Do you believe she is?"

"It's hard to believe-----"

"*Do you believe she's a traitor?*"

Agony shrank back from her fury. "No, I don't," she said meekly. "Don't be so savage, Sahwah."

Sahwah subsided.

"Where is Veronica?" she asked.

"She's still over at our house. The Secret Service man sent me over here to bring all you girls over, he wants to talk to you."

Sahwah roused the girls from bed with her sensational piece of news and they all hastened home with Agony. Mr. Wing took them upstairs to his study and they went in, feeling queer and frightened. Veronica was sitting there, her face as white as a sheet, her great eyes dilated with fear and bewilderment. The artist lounged in the window seat, watching Veronica closely and smiling slightly to himself, and facing Veronica sat a small, keen-looking man with little, steely

gray eyes that bored like gimlets.

"These are the girls with whom Miss Lehar is staying," said Mr. Wing. He introduced the little man as Special Agent Sanders.

Sahwah searched Mr. Wing's face pleadingly; he looked greatly puzzled, and very, very much disturbed. Then she looked at the gimlet-eyed man in the chair and saw his eyes rove from one to another of the girls questioningly. He began to speak without preliminary.

"When you girls reached home after this party last night was Miss Lehar there?"

"Yes," answered Migwan and Hinpoha and Gladys together. Sahwah was silent.

Immediately Agent Sanders' eye was upon her. "Was she?" he asked directly of Sahwah.

Sahwah opened her lips and closed them nervously, unable to frame an untruth, and equally unable to tell what she knew. She looked helplessly at Veronica. The room became very still. The others looked at her in astonishment. Agent Sanders bored her with his little, keen eyes. Sahwah felt herself turning red and white and her heartbeats thumped against her eardrums. She sent Veronica another miserable look. Veronica returned the look steadily, and then she spoke.

"Tell him you saw me coming in the back door after you got home," she said calmly.

"Is that true?" Agent Sanders asked of Sahwah.

Sahwah nodded. A gasp of astonishment went up from the other three Winnebagos.

"Tell all the circumstances connected with the incident," Agent Sanders directed Sahwah.

"There weren't any circumstances connected with it," replied Sahwah earnestly. "We had just come home and our friend had had bad news and was going away early in the morning and we were getting her ready and I went out in the back entry way to get something and just then Veronica came in the back door."

"You thought she had gone home with a sick headache and was in bed?"

"Yes," replied Sahwah, "but when she came in I decided she had been out for a walk." This sounded like a perfectly natural explanation to Sahwah.

"Didn't it strike you strange that she should have gone walking at that hour?"

"No, it didn't," replied Sahwah eagerly. "She often does it."

"Ah-h!" Agent Sanders merely breathed the syllable, yet it held a world of meaning. Sahwah felt vaguely apprehensive.

"So she often goes out walking at midnight, does she?" continued the agent. Sahwah felt that she had made a misstep somewhere, and was harming Veronica's cause instead of helping it, but the eyes of the agent seemed to be drawing all her knowledge from her like a magnet picking up needles.

"I meant," said Sahwah, "that she often has those sick headaches, and when she does she generally goes out walking to cure them."

"And these headaches generally occur at night?"

"Yes."

"In other words," said Agent Sanders as confidently as if he could see right inside of her head and knew everything in it, "this is not the first time Miss Lehar has gone on a mysterious errand at night---eh?"

Sahwah started, and then was furious at herself because she knew the agent had noticed it.

He bored his eyes right through her, and remarked sarcastically, "You knew this girl to be an alien, an enemy of your country; you knew she was going off on mysterious errands, and yet you didn't think there was anything strange about it!"

Then to Sahwah's relief Agent Sanders fell to making rapid notes in a memorandum book, and ceased addressing her. He turned abruptly to Veronica.

"Where did you go when you left this house last night?" he asked pointblank.

"Down the street to Carver House, through the yard, down the hill behind it, along the road to the edge of town and back," replied Veronica readily.

The agent looked thoughtful for a moment. The straightforwardness of her reply seemed to perplex him a little.

Then he asked, "Whom did you meet down there at the edge of town?"

Veronica did not answer.

"Whom did you meet?" he repeated triumphantly.

Veronica opened her lips as if to speak and then closed them again and remained silent. The room was so still that the heavy ticking of the clock sounded like hammer blows on an anvil. All eyes were on Veronica; the Winnebagos stared, open-mouthed; Sahwah's blood ran cold in her veins; Agent Sanders leaned forward, the whole force of his personality concentrated in his compelling eyes.

"I didn't meet anybody," said Veronica, returning his gaze steadfastly.

"Where did you go, then?"

Veronica was silent.

"Answer me."

"I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because I can't." There was a ring of finality in Veronica's tone.

Agent Sanders scribbled something more in his little notebook. Then he renewed his questioning. "You took that letter to somebody, didn't you?"

"I did not," replied Veronica emphatically. "I told you before, and I repeat it, I know nothing about any letter. I never saw it, and I never heard of it until you accused me of taking it."

The agent smiled knowingly. "To whom did you telephone from this study last night?"

"To a friend of mine."

"Who?"

Veronica refused to answer that question, calmly defying the agent to make her tell. Again there was a sensation in the room. The Winnebagos were ready to drop with astonishment at the strange behavior of Veronica. Sahwah looked around at the various faces. Mr. Wing still wore his puzzled, pained expression; the artist seemed to be getting bored; he looked out of the window and his left hand was playing with his ear, pulling down the lobe and releasing it with a jerk, a gesture he was continually making when his hands were idle. It irritated Sahwah now and made her nervous; she was filled with a desire to tie his hand down so he couldn't reach his ear.

"That will do," said Agent Sanders to the Winnebagos, indicating by a gesture that they were to go out of the room. Sahwah lingered. She stood up beside Veronica and put her arm around her. "She didn't do it! She didn't do it!" she said fiercely, facing the three men fearlessly. "She's as loyal to this country as you are!"

"Possibly," said Agent Sanders drily. "Well, little lady, your faith in your friend is very beautiful to see, but until we find out that someone else took that letter we can't take much stock in it."

"I'll prove to you that she's all right," Sahwah proclaimed rashly, and then reluctantly went out of the room. Her faith in Veronica's innocence was unshaken. Veronica herself had said that she did not know anything about the letter, that was enough for Sahwah. Her friend had spoken, and she never dreamed of doubting her word.

As she went out she saw Mr. Wing rub his hand thoughtfully over his forehead and heard him say, "But hang it, Sanders, you didn't hear her play last night. She had us all roused to such a pitch of patriotism that we were ready to go to the front on the next ship." The agent said nothing, only went on making notes in his little book. The artist sprang to open the door for Sahwah, but she took the knob out from under his very hand and passed him with hostile eyes.

Soon afterward Agent Sanders and Mr. Wing went to Philadelphia and took Veronica away with them. Before they went the Winnebagos all flung themselves upon Mr. Wing and implored him not to let the agent take her away. "You know she is all right," pleaded Sahwah. "You tell him not to arrest her."

Mr. Wing threw out his hands in a helpless gesture. "You don't understand, my dear," he said patiently. "I can't tell Special Agent Sanders 'not to' do anything. I don't happen to have the authority."

"Oh-h," said the Winnebagos.

"You see," he went on gently, "Agent Sanders is only doing his duty in arresting her. It's his business to run down the enemies of our country and he is working for the good of all of us. The case against her is pretty strong, you'll have to

admit. She's an alien enemy, a friend of this Prince Karl Augustus; is wearing a ring which his wife gave her. Then here comes this letter from him which will expose him as the head of a great plot. Veronica is in the house with that letter; she is known to have been alone in the room where it was; soon after that she leaves the house and says she is going home with a sick headache. When you get home you find her trying to steal unobserved into the back entry. She herself admits that she had an appointment with someone during that time. The next morning the letter is found to have disappeared. Naturally all suspicion points to her, and how could Sanders do anything else but put her under arrest? This is a serious matter, much more serious than you can guess, if that letter goes back into the hands of the prince's agents."

"But do you really think she took the letter?" asked Sahwah despairingly.

Mr. Wing shrugged his shoulders and repeated his gesture of helplessness. "It's hard to know what to expect from such a temptuous nature as that," he said seriously. "A nature which can work up such a passionate loyalty for an adopted country--what must its feelings have been toward its own native land? Suppose when the chance unexpectedly came to aid the cause for which her country is fighting and for which her father died, the old ties were stronger than the new, and she could not resist the temptation? A nature like hers is capable of going to any extreme. Naturally I hate to suspect her of any connection with enemy agents, but as a servant of the government it is my duty to act upon anything that is in the least suspicious. Sanders is absolutely convinced that she's a dangerous spy in the employ of the enemy, for she answers the description of a young girl he has been trying to find for a long time, a girl who belongs to the Hungarian nobility who has helped German agents in this country.

"Sanders is dead sure she took that letter and passed it back to the prince's agents, and you really can't blame him for thinking so. For, hang it all, if *she* didn't, who under the shining sun did?"

Only Sahwah, with her faith in her friend unshaken, though circumstances pointed accusing fingers from every direction, declared stoutly, "She didn't, I know she didn't. Some day you'll find out I'm right!"

CHAPTER XVI

CLOUDY DAYS

The days dragged themselves along and a week loitered past which seemed an age to the Winnebagos. No word had come from Nyoda since a telegram she had sent upon her arrival, saying that Sherry was very low and not expected to live. They had written her about Veronica's plight, but there was no answer to that.

Neither did they hear anything about Veronica. Mr. Wing had been in Philadelphia ever since the day of Veronica's arrest, but they had not heard from him since.

The Winnebagos wore themselves out talking about Veronica. The subject of her mysterious excursions from the house was always in the air, and it formed a hurdle over which no one could jump. Where had she gone on those excursions? Why didn't she confide in them and satisfy their minds on this point?

It usually happens in such instances, where our friends fail to take us into their confidence on matters which we think we have a right to know, that our pride is hurt at the neglect and pretty soon we begin to have suspicions in regard to the mysterious action. So it was with the Winnebagos. At first they only felt hurt that Veronica should have secrets away from them, but soon they began to say to themselves that there must have been something suspicious somewhere, if she could not confide in them, her best friends.

It was Agony who voiced this sentiment the oftenest, and kept the mystery constantly stirred up. She never let them forget it for a moment. She seemed inclined to argue as her father had done, that Veronica's ties of blood and birth had been too strong for her and in an unguarded moment she had yielded to the impulse to assist the cause of her native land. The constant repetition of this belief began to influence the others. Much as they were loath to believe that Veronica would assist the enemies of their country, they were always conscious of the fact that they had never really known Veronica; that they could not understand her strange, passionate nature; that never in their acquaintance with her had they ever been able to guess what she would do next. There had always been a gulf between themselves and her which they had never been able to cross entirely, much as they had come to love her; there was always a line drawn around her over which they had never been able to pass. They loved her dearly; they admired her wildly; but they no more understood the soul that was locked up in her uncommunicative nature than they understood the riddle of the Sphinx. They all realized this, and were filled with sorrowful forebodings. The fact that she had known Prince Karl Augustus loomed larger and larger in their minds as the days wore on, and it seemed not at all improbable that she had seized the opportunity to aid him in his activities, without ever stopping to think of the consequences of her act. They were broken-hearted over it, but gradually came to believe the possibility of the charge against her.

Only Sahwah stood out stanchly for her right along, refusing to doubt her for a moment.

"I don't care if she *is* an alien enemy!" she declared vehemently. "She's my Veronica, and I know she never had anything to do with it, so there!"

She wouldn't listen to Agony and her wise-sounding talk, withdrew to herself a great part of the time, and for lack of other supporters spoke out her mind to the portrait of Elizabeth Carver, hanging serenely over the harp in the long parlor.

"You would have stood up for your friend, no matter what the others said, wouldn't you?" she demanded beseechingly, and it seemed to her that Elizabeth nodded her head in confirmation.

Then one day came news which filled them all with consternation. Veronica was to be interned! Mr. Wing came home and told them about it briefly. The weight of suspicion had been so strong against Veronica that nothing could stand against it; her internment had been ordered by the agents of the government. They were now awaiting the arrival of the internment papers from Washington; when these came she would be taken away.

Mr. Wing wearily waved aside the hosts of questions poured out by the dismayed Winnebagos. He had suffered great chagrin over the loss of the letter which was to have played such an important part in the coming trial; sober afterthoughts had convinced him of the possibility of Veronica's connection with enemy agents; he had come to believe it implicitly now. Of course, she had taken in these simple girls with her spectacular protestations of loyalty to this country; that was part of the game. His anxiety was all for his girls, for fear they had already compromised themselves in some way.

The Winnebagos saw him in a new mood to-day, stern, inflexible, obdurate. He curtly advised them to speedily forget their friend and to say nothing to outsiders about the occurrence. He refused to tell them where she was at present, and would not hear of their having any intercourse with her.

"The first thing you know you'll be suspected of connivance yourselves," he warned. "And I also advise you not to express too much sympathy for your friend," he continued. "It's a sure way to make yourselves unpopular these days."

Stricken, Sahwah sped home, and fleeing from the others, went into the woods by herself. That was always her place of refuge in trouble. When others would have sought human comfort and advice, Sahwah fled straight to the woods. There she could think clearly and gather together her stunned faculties.

She wandered on blindly until she came to the brook, the little laughing stream she loved so well, and sat there for hours trying to think of some plan by which she could save Veronica. For the conviction was strong within her that Veronica was innocent and it would not budge for all the suspicions in the world. She thought of one wild extravagant scheme after the other, and abandoned them all, and at last, utterly crushed and low-spirited, she took her way back to Carver House.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DRILL CONTEST

While the Winnebagos were gasping under the cold shower of upsetting events, time marched steadily onward toward the day set for the military drill contest between Oakwood and Hillsdale. In these last days the Winnebagos realized what it meant to have the honor of a town on their shoulders. Although they had little heart for drilling they must turn out every day with their company of Oakwood girls just as if nothing had happened, must be the life and brains of the company and never appear to let their enthusiasm flag. Everyone in town depended upon them to win the contest for Oakwood; everywhere they went they were greeted with pleasant smiles and complimentary remarks; they were touched and flattered by the confidence that was reposed in them---they simply *had* to win that contest for Oakwood. No one else knew anything about Veronica; that was kept a state secret. The Winnebagos simply told Miss Raper that she had been called out of town and would not be in the contest, and Miss Raper chose another girl to put in her place.

Migwan and Gladys and Hinpoha were sitting together getting the suits ready which they were to wear in the drill---white skirts and middies, white shoes and stockings, red, white and blue arm band---when Sahwah came in waving an envelope over her head. "Letter from Nyoda!" she called. The three dropped their sewing and fell upon her in a body.

"Open it quick!"

"Here, take the scissors."

"Oh, read it out loud, Migwan, I can't wait until it's passed around."

Migwan promptly complied while the rest listened eagerly as she read:

Good Samaritan Hospital, St. Margaret's, N.S.

DEAR GIRLS:

Oh, I'm so thankful I can hardly write; my pen wants to dance jigs instead of staying on the lines, but I must let you know at once because I know how anxious you have been. Sherry is out of danger, he rounded the corner today, and there isn't much doubt about his recovery.

But if you had ever seen the day I arrived--! I got to St. Margaret's in the afternoon, tumbled into the first cab that stood outside the station; begged the driver to lose no time getting to the hospital, and went rattledly banging over the rough streets as though we were fleeing from the German army. The hospital was filled to overflowing with the survivors of the wreck, all of whom had been brought into the port of St. Margaret's. Beds were everywhere---in the offices, in the corridors, in the entries. It took me some time to locate Sherry because there was so much confusion, but I found him at last in one of the wards.

As I came up I heard a doctor who had been attending him say to the nurse beside him, "It's all up with him, poor chap."

Then he turned around and saw me standing there, and I said quietly, "I am his wife."

He and the nurse exchanged glances, and he looked distressed. He seemed to expect me to go off into a fit or a faint, and looked surprised because I stayed so calm. I was surprised myself. I seemed to be in a dream and moved and acted quite automatically.

Sherry did not know me; he had been struck on the head while swimming for a lifeboat, and had been insensible for hours. The doctors said his skull was fractured. They had done everything they could; there was nothing to do now but wait until the end came.

I had had nothing to eat all day, because I had been too nervous to eat on the train. But I stayed by his bedside all that night watching. He was still living in the morning and I left him at times to help look after other patients, because the nurses simply couldn't get around fast enough.

One of the men I waited on was a friend of Sherry's, a Y.M.C.A. man. He said that Sherry was being sent back to America to give a series of lectures. Just think! to have come safely through those awful months in the trenches, and then to perish when so near home!

For three days he lay in a stupor and all that time I never slept a wink because they said the end would come any minute without warning. But instead of that he opened his eyes without warning this morning, recognized me, and said, "Hello, Elizabeth," as casually as if we hadn't been separated for a year.

He's been awake now for five hours and the doctor says he's out of danger. I sort of let go then when the tension was over, but I've slept a bit since and have got a grip on myself again. I'm so happy that I feel like dancing a jig up and down the wards, and it is only with great difficulty that I can restrain myself.

I must stop now, because Sherry is clamoring for refreshments.

Your blissful, too-thankful-to-live

NYODA.

P.S. The soap is in the closet under the kitchen stairs. I forgot to tell you before I went away.

A chorus of glad cries greeted the reading of the letter. "Sherry's going to get well! Isn't it wonderful?"

Hinpoha and Migwan flung their arms around each other in an exuberance of feeling just at the same moment that Sahwah and Gladys did the same thing, and they all laughed and hugged each other for joy.

"Dear Nyoda! Think of her, going without sleep for three nights and keeping up through it all!"

"And helping to take care of the other injured ones! Isn't that Nyoda all over, though---*Give Service*, no matter how badly she might feel herself!"

"But, she never said a word about Veronica," said Sahwah in a puzzled tone, when the first excitement had subsided. "I can't understand it."

"She probably forgot it, she was so thankful about Sherry," said Gladys.

"Not she," replied Sahwah positively. "She couldn't have gotten our letter. I'm going to write again."

* * * * *

The day of the great contest had arrived. It was the 15th of August, the day on which Oakwood celebrated the one hundred and seventieth anniversary of its founding. An elaborate celebration had been prepared, with parades and pageants in the daytime, and fireworks and a sham battle at night. The military drill contest had been a part of this celebration, that Oakwood's victory over Hillsdale might have a more spectacular setting. Oakwood was making much more of an occasion out of that contest than the Winnebagos had expected and their sporting blood began to tingle. The thought of winning before all that crowd thrilled them through and through.

Agony was in a high feather. Hers was a nature which expanded in the limelight; crowded audiences inspired her to outdo herself instead of "fussing" her as they did Oh-Pshaw. She could hardly wait for their hour to strike.

The contest was at five in the afternoon, after the parade and before the evening's program of fireworks. At four o'clock the Hillsdale delegation drove into town in hayracks decorated with flags and bunting, the troop of Girl Scouts who were going to drill in the first rack, and after them several racks full of Hillsdale girls and boys, coming to watch the contest.

"There they come!" whispered the Oakwood girls to each other, and the thrill of the coming struggle began to go through them at the sight of their adversaries.

"Oh, I'm afraid I'm going to make a mistake!" said Oh-Pshaw, turning quite cold. "I'll never get through that field formation wheel, I know."

"You will *not* make a mistake," said Agony emphatically. "Don't think about the audience, just think about that trip to Washington we're going to get, and keep cool. I don't see what you're so excited for anyway. I'm not a bit scared." Then she added, "How are you ever going to be a Torch Bearer if you can't keep cool?" It was a home thrust, and Agony knew it. Oh-Pshaw wanted to be a Torch Bearer more than anything else and she considered this occasion a test of her fitness. She must not get rattled!

The contest took place on Commons Field. A tent had been set up on either end of the field for the use of the people in the pageant, and the two drill companies used these tents as points of entry upon the drill grounds, forming their squads inside. The judges, who were three military men belonging neither to Oakwood nor Hillsdale, sat half way up the hill overlooking the center of the grounds. The Hillsdales, being the visitors, were given the privilege of drilling first.

The Oakwood girls looked on critically as their rivals marched out on the field and began their maneuvers. The Hillsdale supporters began to cheer and kept it up incessantly. The spirits of the Oakwood girls rose as they watched. The Hillsdale Scouts did their steps perfectly, they had to admit, but they lacked "pep." The Winnebagos knew they could put a dash into their performance that would beat this mere mechanical perfection all hollow. Their nervousness left them; the music of the band, the presence of the crowd, the sight of themselves in their natty white uniforms had gone to

their heads like wine. They were inspired; they could hardly wait to get out on the drill grounds; they knew they would march as they had never marched before.

The Hillsdale Scouts finished their maneuvers and marched off amid a wild outbreak of applause from their friends, and Oakwood, tingling with eagerness, sprang to attention at Miss Raper's command. The bugle blew its signal for their entrance, the band crashed into a march and the squads began to move forward. A roar of applause went up from the crowds on the hillside; Oakwood citizens hailed their champions with all their powers of heart and voice.

"CAMP FIRE GIRLS!" yelled several thousand enthusiastic throats. The Winnebagos thrilled as they had never thrilled before. Here was the whole town honoring them, *them*, depending upon them to lead the Oakwood girls to victory over the ancient rival, Hillsdale. Agony was nearly suffocating with pride; applause was the breath of life to her.

The company came to a halt opposite the judges, one squad behind the other.

"Squads Left--Hunch!" Miss Raper's sharp command pierced them like a bullet. With the ease of long practice the squads moved in obedience to the command. The maneuvers had commenced. Command after command rang out, which they obeyed with conscious snap and finish, pivoting, wheeling, rear marching, left and right flanking in perfect step and rhythm. Applause was continuous, Oakwood citizens had recognized the "pep" in their performance and knew what the decision of the judges would be.

The first half of the maneuvers was over; there remained now only the prize figure of the drill, the difficult field formation, in which the squads wheeled into the form of a cross and then revolved by fours around a common center, like the spokes of a wheel going around. It was a complicated figure and required rapid thinking as to whether to turn to right or left in certain places.

The first half of the figure was executed without a flaw; the squads stood ready to form the cross. "*Ready---Wheel!*"

Alas for Oh-Pshaw! When the critical moment arrived and she got to thinking how dreadful it would be if she *should* make a mistake, she went all to pieces, lost her head and marched forward instead of backward, crashing violently into Agony, who was marching with the four ahead. Not prepared for the collision, Agony lost her footing and went down in a heap on the ground, covering her white suit with dust from head to foot. A simultaneous gasp of dismay went up from the audience and the company, while the Hillsdale-ites laughed triumphantly. One of the Hillsdale boys, a youth of eighteen, who considered himself superlatively funny, called out, "Oakwood Squad, *Awkw'd* Squad!"

Agony scrambled to her feet, white with anger, and Oh-Pshaw stood still where the collision had occurred, too horrorstruck to move. A low command from Miss Raper and the squads righted themselves into line and proceeded with the maneuver. There was no vim left, however. Oakwood had lost. They heroically struggled through the remainder of the figure, but Oh-Pshaw, completely demoralized, made one misturn after the other. The bugler "sounded off" and the contest was over.

The Winnebagos and their company would have fled away and hidden themselves, but no, they must march back onto the field with the Hillsdale company to hear the decision of the judges. It was a fearful ordeal, that standing up before the disappointed citizens of Oakwood to hear their triumphantly smiling rivals pronounced the victors, one that taxed the courage and composure of the girls to the utmost. With a desperate effort to appear blandly indifferent to the decision they stood frozen stiff at attention, carefully avoiding every eye in the audience. The spokesman of the judges stood up and prolonged the torture five long minutes, by complimenting first one company and then the other upon different points of their performance. It seemed he would never come to the point and pronounce Hillsdale the winner. All that time Agony stood there, acutely conscious of the dust on her dress, boiling with fury at Oh-Pshaw because she had

caused her to make a spectacle of herself. The taunt, "Oakwood Squad, *Awkw'd Squad*," still rankled in her breast.

The spokesman came to the point at last, and with much flowery language announced that "all things considered, Hillsdale had displayed a greater degree of excellency," *etc.* A splitting cheer went up from the Hillsdale visitors; the Oakwood citizens were glum and silent. With a last desperate effort to maintain an outwardly Stoic attitude the Winnebagos marched with their company from the field. It was all over. Oakwood had trusted in them, and they had not fulfilled the trust.

Once inside the shelter of their tent the company gave way to tears in some spots and to wrath in others. Agony turned furiously upon Oh-Pshaw and vented her rage and disappointment in angry up-braidings; Hinpoha wept unconsolably; Gladys looked a world of reproach whenever she turned to Oh-Pshaw, and even gentle Migwan exclaimed in a voice that was sharp with disappointment, "Oh, Oh-Pshaw, how *could* you?"

Poor Oh-Pshaw! She felt as though she could never hold up her head again. She could never be a Torch Bearer now; she had disgraced the Winnebagos, they would never have anything more to do with her. Agony, her beloved twin, had turned against her; there was nothing left in the world for her now. With quivering lips and smarting eyes she slipped out of the tent and lost herself in the crowd outside. The rest did not notice her going; they were too busy lamenting. By and by Sahwah looked around and missed her.

"Where's Oh-Pshaw?" she asked.

"I don't know," replied Hinpoha, noticing for the first time that she was no longer in the tent. "She was here a minute ago."

"She'd *better* run and hide," sputtered Agony, still vindictive in her wounded pride.

Sahwah stared at Agony thoughtfully and her sympathy went out to Oh-Pshaw, having to bear the whole brunt of their disaster, her whole day spoiled for her. Other features of the celebration were going on in Oakwood; the pageant of the Early Founders was beginning. "Come on out and see what's going on," said Sahwah, who hated to miss anything, even for the melancholy pleasure of crying over spilt milk.

So they drifted back into the celebration and their interest in the proceedings soon began to dull the sharpness of their disappointment. Oh-Pshaw was nowhere to be seen, however, and by-and-by Sahwah slipped away from the others and went in search of her. She guessed that Oh-Pshaw might have gone home, to get away from the girls, and went to the house, but it was closed and locked, and there was no sign of Oh-Pshaw in the garden anywhere. Then Sahwah remembered that Oh-Pshaw had a favorite nook out in the woods where she went when she wanted to be alone, a wide-spreading, low-boughed chestnut tree in a dense, shady grove, away from the singing brook with its terrifying gurgle; into the branches she climbed and sat as in a great wide armchair, secure from interruption. She had taken Sahwah with her once. Of course that was where she would go.

Sahwah hesitated a moment. Over on Main Street the fun was going at full blast; it was just about time for the balloon to go up. If she went out to look for Oh-Pshaw she would miss it. After all, Oh-Pshaw might not have gone to the woods; she might be in the crowd somewhere, watching the performance where the girls couldn't see her. But Sahwah knew Oh-Pshaw, and knew that she considered herself disgraced and that she would have no heart to look at the rest of the performance. She had a vision of Oh-Pshaw sitting disconsolate out in the woods, hiding away from the festivities, and that vision refused to go away.

"I'll go and *see*, anyway," Sahwah decided resolutely, "and if she *is* there I'll make her come back with me, and if she *isn't*, there's no harm done by going. I've seen balloons before, and I'll see them again."

Turning her back on the festive town she took the path to the woods, and hurried along with light, swift footsteps, humming as she went. Just inside the woods she pounced on something in the path with a little exclamation of triumph. It was a red, white and blue arm band, undoubtedly Oh-Pshaw's. She *had* come to the woods after all. Sahwah sped on to the big chestnut tree, finding it without difficulty, although she had only been there once. Sure enough, there was Oh-Pshaw, all curled up in the embrace of the wide branches, her face in her arms, the picture of abandoned woe. Sahwah swung up beside her and called her gently by name. Oh-Pshaw raised her head with a start and looked surprised when she saw who it was.

"Hello," she responded forlornly to Sahwah's greeting.

"Don't take it so to heart," said Sahwah cheerfully. "It wasn't as bad as you think."

"The girls will never speak to me again," said Oh-Pshaw dismally, "and you can't blame them, either."

"Oh, come, they will, too," said Sahwah. "They're all over it already and out enjoying the rest of the show. Come on back. You wouldn't want to miss the sham battle for anything."

Oh-Pshaw's woebegone look began to fade from her face and her heart was warmed clear to the bottom at the thought of Sahwah's leaving the celebration and coming all the way out here to find her. The world took on a cheerful hue again; she sat up and dried her eyes and began to smooth out her crumpled uniform. Sahwah jumped lightly from the tree and Oh-Pshaw followed her, but Oh-Pshaw's foot had gone to sleep from sitting on it so long and she jumped stiffly and came down on a jagged stump, skinning her shin from ankle to knee and giving the knee itself a bad bump.

"*Anything* broken?" asked Sahwah, bending solicitously over the injured member and inspecting the damage.

"I guess not," replied Oh-Pshaw, wincing with the pain, "though it hurts like fury. I guess it's just skinned."

Sahwah bound up the two places that were bleeding the most with her handkerchief and Oh-Pshaw's and was gently replacing the stocking when her ears caught a sound--a noise like the humming of a giant bee. "What's that noise?" asked Oh-Pshaw.

"It's an aeroplane," said Sahwah. "It must be *the* aeroplane that's coming over from Philadelphia to take part in the sham battle. The one has been in Oakwood all day, but the other hadn't arrived yet when I started out to look for you. It's coming in this direction, over the woods. Come on, let's run to the open space by the Devil's Punch Bowl and see if he flies over there." Sahwah seized Oh-Pshaw by the hand and started away on a run, and Oh-Pshaw followed as best she could for the pain in her knee. The humming noise grew louder and louder as they ran, and then suddenly it stopped altogether.

"Where is he, is he gone?" asked Oh-Pshaw in disappointment.

"I can't imagine," replied Sahwah, looking up in bewilderment when they came out beside the Punch Bowl. "No, there he is," she cried, as the machine suddenly shot into sight directly above them. "Oh-Pshaw!" she screamed, "it's coming down!"

Rooted to the spot, they watched it, as nose downward the machine came rushing toward them, struck against the rock cliffs high above them and dropped with a terrific splash into the Devil's Punch Bowl.

CHAPTER XVIII

OUT OF A CLEAR SKY

It happened so quickly that the two girls had no time to jump back out of the way; they were caught in the deluge of water that shot out from the Punch Bowl on every side. When they got their eyes open again the luckless flying machine lay before them in the water, a mass of wreckage. Oh-Pshaw gave a little muffled shriek and sat down on a log, hiding her face in her hands. Sahwah shook her roughly by the shoulder.

"*Oh-Pshaw!* The man's under the machine, in the water!"

Oh-Pshaw shuddered and did not look up.

"*Oh-Pshaw! Oh-Pshaw!* He'll drown!"

Oh-Pshaw looked up, still shuddering, and gazed in fascinated horror at the thing in front of her. "Isn't he--dead?" she asked in a hoarse whisper.

"No, he isn't, he's *struggling*. Don't you see the water moving? I'm going out and help him," Sahwah exclaimed with sudden resolution.

She waded swiftly out into the water until it became too deep for her to stand and then swam out to the wrecked machine, in the clutches of which the unfortunate flyer was held fast. As she reached it, the man's head came up above the surface for a moment and then immediately disappeared again. Sahwah held on to the machine with one hand and with the other reached down and brought his head up out of the water again. His eyes were closed and he was quite limp. He had fainted. Try as she might she could not free him from the wreck of the machine entirely; he was securely pinioned. All she could do was hold his head out of the water.

"Run! Get help!" she called out sharply to Oh-Pshaw. "I can't get him out." Oh-Pshaw sprang up and hobbled off as fast as she could go.

Sahwah pulled herself up on top of the machine, which was partly above the surface of the water, and sat there in a tolerably secure position holding the unconscious man up. A red stream flowing from the side of his head began to spread in the water and lengthen out in the flowing cataract of the Punch Bowl. It gave Sahwah the shivers, that ever lengthening red stream; she averted her eyes and held on grimly, trying to calculate how long it would take Oh-Pshaw to bring help. Then a new danger arose. The wrecked machine began to tilt and settle and finally with a sickening lurch went down under Sahwah, dragging her and her unconscious burden into the depths of the Devil's Punch Bowl. When she came up and struck out for the bank she found she was still clutching the collar of the unconscious man, for by some lucky chance the tipping of the machine had released him. She brought him to shore and worked over him to expel the water from his lungs and soon was relieved to see that he was breathing again. She took off the great goggles that covered half his face and opened the coat that was so tightly buttoned around his neck, which it seemed must be choking him. There was something hauntingly familiar about the face; it came over Sahwah that she had seen it before, where, she could not remember. It was a young face; the aviator looked little more than a boy.

Although breathing, the man remained unconscious, and Sahwah thought about Sherry and his injury and wondered if this man's skull were fractured. She rolled the collar still farther back from his throat to give him more air. Then she noticed a slender gold chain around his neck, and pulling at it brought up a gold locket. It was a girl's locket, heart-shaped, with a monogram engraved on the outside. Impulsively Sahwah opened it. Then she uttered an exclamation of surprise and gazed in round-eyed wonder at the picture inside. It was her own picture! The little snapshot she had given Hinpoha to wear in *her* locket! Why, it *was* Hinpoha's locket! There were her initials, D.M.B., entwined in Old English letters on the outside. It was the locket Hinpoha had lost on the train coming to Nyoda's. How came it in the possession of this strange aviator? It was a puzzle Sahwah could not solve. She was still lost in wonder over it when she heard footsteps and looked around to see Oh-Pshaw appear between the trees, limping painfully and weeping.

"I couldn't make it," sobbed Oh-Pshaw. "My knee--I don't know what's the matter with it, I can't walk on it, it keeps doubling up under me. I fell down on it every other step and each time it hurt worse. I only got a little way and then I knew it would take me hours to get back to town, so I came back to tell you. H-how did you get the m-man loose and up on shore?"

Sahwah explained briefly.

"You run and get help, I'll stay here with him," said Oh-Pshaw, looking fearfully around her at the shadows which were lengthening in the gully. There were no lingering sunsets in the Devil's Punch Bowl; night fell swiftly as the dropping of a curtain when the sun got behind the great cliff on the western side. Little did Sahwah dream what an ordeal Oh-Pshaw was committing herself to when she bravely turned around and returned to the Devil's Punch Bowl when she realized that her slow progress was likely to endanger the life of the injured man. To sit beside the Devil's Punch Bowl in the dark, and listen to the terrible gurgling of the water through the basin! The blood curdled in her veins at the mere thought of it, and yet she choked back her terror with a stern hand and said no word as Sahwah rose from beside the unconscious man, called "All right!" over her shoulder and disappeared between the trees like an arrow shot from a bow.

Inside of five minutes after Sahwah left it was dark as midnight in the Punch Bowl, dark with an inky blackness that clutched at Oh-Pshaw as with hands while the hideous gurgling filled her ears and turned her blood to water. She was going to faint, she knew it; the strength went out of her limbs; icy drops gathered on her forehead. Then she remembered. She *dared* not faint. She must keep her hand pressed tightly over the wound in the man's head to keep the blood from flowing. Sahwah had said so. Sahwah said he would bleed to death if she did not. Sahwah had just started to do it, when she had come back and reported her failure to bring help. Now she had to do it. She pressed her hands tightly over the wound as Sahwah had showed her, and tried to close her ears to the gurgling. But the old terror had her by the throat, suffocating her, paralyzing her hands. They dropped uselessly at her sides; she crouched limp and panting and nerveless beside the helpless man. Then, for the first time in her life Oh-Pshaw began to fight the fear. She forced her clammy hands back over the wound, she cast desperately around for something to think about beside the murmuring horror at her feet. She began to sing, in a scarcely audible voice, and through chattering teeth:

"L-lay m-me to sl-leep in sh-sheltering flame,
O M-master of the Hidden F-fire!
W-w-ash pure my heart, and c-cleanse f-for me
M-my Soul's D-desire!"

Over and over she sang it, through chattering teeth, keeping in her mind the picture of a warm, glowing fire and herself sitting beside it, cozy and comfortable, and finally the picture became so real that she forgot about the gurgling water and gave herself up to pleasant fire dreams. Oh-Pshaw herself was master, not of the Hidden Fire, but of the Hidden Fear! She was still sitting beside her imaginary fire when footsteps startled her and in another minute the place was ablaze with

searchlights and swarming over with people.

CHAPTER XIX

KAISER BILL MIXES IN

"Isn't it just too wonderful for anything?" said Hinpoha in an awed tone. Then she burst out triumphantly, "I *told* her there was a light-haired man coming into her life---and he did! Did you ever *hear* of anything so romantic as this, anyway? He said she was a dream of his come to life! When he first saw her in the train that day he thought she wasn't *real*! And then finding my locket on the floor that way and seeing her picture in it and thinking it was *her* locket, and wearing it all this time! I never *heard* of anything so wonderful. It's better than anything I ever read in a book. Such a nice-sounding name he has, too---Robert Allison; it's so---unanimous."

"Don't you mean 'euphonious'?" asked Migwan with a smile.

"Well, 'euphonious,' then," amended Hinpoha. Wrapped up as she was in this marvel of romance that had happened in the placid, everyday lives of the Winnebagos, she was not bothering about any carping correctness of words. She sat at the foot of Oh-Pshaw's bed, where Oh-Pshaw lay with her knee propped up on a pillow, and went over the details of Sahwah's case for the twentieth time with Agony and Migwan and Gladys, all of them foregathered in Oh-Pshaw's room to keep her company.

"It was just like a book!" Hinpoha went on impressively. "Sahwah passed by the door of his room over there last night after the doctors had gone, and it was open, and nobody was in the room with him because your grandmother had gone downstairs for something, and she saw that the curtain was blowing out of the window. She went in to pull it back and while she was in the room he opened his eyes and said, 'Is it really you?' He thought he was *dreaming* and she wasn't real at all. Then he told her all about his dream girl, and about seeing her in the train that day, and finding the locket, and everything. He said the locket had brought him good luck wherever he went, for half a dozen times he had escaped as by a miracle from being killed in accidents to his plane. And to think that the last time it was she herself who saved his life!" The utter romance of the thing struck Hinpoha momentarily speechless.

Then she thought of something else, and broke out afresh.

"Don't you remember, when I was telling her fortune there in the train, I told her that the light-haired man had already come into her life, and she made fun of me and said it must have been the Swede brakeman? Well, what I told her was true, because Lieutenant Allison had already seen her then! *Now*, will you say there isn't any truth in fortunes?"

The Winnebagos could only gasp at the workings of fate!

"But what about the other man you said you saw in her fortune, the light-haired man who was going to turn dark after a while?" asked Migwan.

"I don't know," replied Hinpoha. Then she added, "Give him time! He hasn't shown up yet, but he will, you see if he doesn't."

And in view of the success of her former prophecy the Winnebagos could not very well have any doubts.

"Wasn't it a miracle that Sahwah happened to be in the woods when the plane came down?" said Agony in a hushed voice.

"Yes, but she wouldn't have been there if we hadn't lost the contest," said Migwan musingly. "Isn't it queer the way things work out sometimes? Here, we wanted to win that contest so badly, and were disappointed when we didn't, and yet if we *had* won it Lieutenant Allison would have been killed!"

The rest looked at each other in silent awe at *this* marvelous working of fate! In a dim, groping way they all felt the touch of an unseen, mighty hand in their affairs, guiding them this way or that as it chose, regardless of their own plans or intentions.

"It was really Oh-Pshaw that saved his life," said Gladys, "because she made the mistake that made us lose."

"And I was so hateful about it, and said such mean things!" said Agony contritely. "I take it all back, Oh-Pshaw. It was the luckiest thing you ever did to get rattled then."

Oh-Pshaw smiled forgivingly and all was serene between the twins once more.

While the Winnebago tongues were wagging busily in Oh-Pshaw's room and Lieutenant Allison was lying quite comfortable in bed in the big square bedroom of the Wing home, where he had been carried when brought in from the woods the night before with a ragged cut in his left temple and a fractured arm, Sahwah, breathless with wonder at the strange new thing that had come into her life, fled from the chattering girls and went wandering by herself in the silence of the woods, where she could think and dream undisturbed.

So preoccupied was she that she had passed out of the gate of Carver House without even noticing Kaiser Bill, who had broken out of his confines and was pulling the honeysuckle vine off the fence. The Kaiser stopped pulling for a moment as she came out and eyed her warily, on guard for a well-aimed stone, but she passed by unheeding. It betokened deep abstraction indeed when Sahwah ignored the depredations of Kaiser Bill. The Kaiser executed a defiant caper under her very nose and then returned blandly to his vine pulling, sending a suspicious look after her from time to time as she passed down the hill.

Through the troubles that had overtaken Carver House, Kaiser Bill had gained a temporary reprieve. In the excitement over Nyoda's going away he had been forgotten entirely for a whole week, and of course nothing would be done about his execution until she returned. Kaiser Bill was making the most of his reprieve by breaking bounds every day and damaging property to his heart's content.

But not even Kaiser Bill in mischief could hold Sahwah's attention now. She walked on in the golden afternoon sunshine, her heart attuned to the song of the wild thrush that came pouring out of the stillness of the woods. She sought her own favorite haunt, a mossy seat beside the little singing stream, where she loved to sit and watch the water tumble and foam over the rocks, but when she got there she found the place already occupied. Eugene Prince, the artist, sat there, his head tilted back against the trunk of a tree, sound asleep, with his sketching portfolio beside him on the ground and his hat on the other side. Sahwah scowled at the sleeping man and passed swiftly on. She had no desire to sit near him, even if he *was* asleep. She found another place, far downstream, where there was a rocky seat close to the water, and, curling herself down in it, she watched the water tumble and foam, and gave herself over to pondering on the delightful mystery of life and fate.

Upstream, in Sahwah's own private nook, the invader reclined at ease, steeped in the sound slumber of a drowsy midsummer afternoon. Upon this peaceful scene there appeared a sinister and menacing apparition, a shaggy body mounted on slender, adventurous legs, and terminating in a mischievous-shaped head with evilly glittering eyes and wicked-looking horns. It was none other than Kaiser Bill, on whom the taste of honeysuckle had palled, wandering far afield in search of something to tickle his discriminating palate. He stood still and surveyed the scene, eyeing the various

articles spread out before him with an appraising eye, like a man in a Thompson's restaurant looking over the articles on the counter and trying to make up his mind what he will have. He looked at the pencil, he looked at the sketch pad; he sniffed experimentally at the hat and then at the portfolio. The portfolio went to the spot; it was made of leather with brass corners. He had not had such a treat in many a day. He licked his chops; the water of anticipation began to gather in his mouth. With a greedy movement he sank his teeth into the portfolio and began his feast. In his sportive delight he played with his prize, tossing it to the ground and attacking it from all sides, while his eyes glittered maliciously at the sleeping artist. Then he moved on down the wood path, dragging the portfolio with him until he found a place which struck him as a suitable banquet Chamber, and there he stood still and began chewing.

Sahwah, sitting on the rock beside the water, gazing off into space with her chin in her hand, suddenly became aware of a champing sound directly in her ear, accompanied by the noise of tearing. She raised her head, and there was Kaiser Bill right beside her tearing something to pieces. She put out her hand and snatched the thing away so quickly that it was gone before Kaiser Bill knew what had happened; then, realizing that to stay in the neighborhood after such a daring act was decidedly perilous, Sahwah sprang up into the branches of a great old willow tree that leaned invitingly near, drew herself up out of his reach and from her safe vantage point made triumphant grimaces down at him. Kaiser Bill, baffled, dashed his head against the tree several times in fury, then rushed into the woods.

Left to herself, Sahwah examined the thing she had rescued, and then it was that she recognized the artist's sketching portfolio. Her first feeling was regret that she hadn't let Kaiser Bill go on eating it. Then she felt ashamed of such vicious thoughts and began looking over the portfolio to see how badly it was damaged. It was a sorry wreck, she decided, after a moment's inspection. Most of the seams were burst open and the soft leather which lined the stiffer outside was torn away in a dozen places. It was empty of sketches, these having been scattered along the path in the progress of Kaiser Bill's capers. Sahwah fingered the torn lining and wondered if the artist would make them pay for the damage. While she was wondering her fingers found something under the lining, and she drew out several sheets of paper, written over in a close hand. Under these were dozens of other sheets, thin as tissue, but very tough and strong, covered with lines and angles and circles and letters in complicated designs. She rummaged still further under the lining and drew out a black ribbon about an inch wide. On it in gold letters was stamped *S.M.S. Eitel Friederich*. After that out came a narrow envelope of exceedingly heavy correspondence paper addressed in a beautifully shaded handwriting to "Lieutenant Waldemar von Oldenbach, *S.M.S. Eitel Friederich*." Sahwah turned it over in her hands. It was sealed on the other side with a wafer of gold wax, the seal being a coronet. The envelope was open at the top, disclosing a letter inside. Sahwah looked at it curiously, but did not open it. It was the superscription on the envelope and the gold letters on the black ribbon that were holding her attention. Sahwah knew from reading the papers that the *S.M.S. Eitel Friederich* was one of the German warships caught in American ports at the outbreak of the war and interned. The ribbon had evidently come from the ship, but what was it doing here under the lining of Eugene Prince's portfolio? Why was he carrying around a ship's ribbon from an interned German vessel? Who was Waldemar von Oldenbach? Evidently a lieutenant on the *Eitel Friederich*, from the address on the letter. But what was a letter addressed to such a person doing in the possession of the artist? A letter from a woman, it undoubtedly was. Something heavy was in the envelope beside the letter; it fell out into Sahwah's lap as she handled the letter. It was a little Maltese cross made of gray metal, with letters stamped in the ends of the crosspieces. Sahwah held it in her hand and spelled out the letters, and then all at once she knew what it was. She had seen a picture of such a thing in a magazine only a few days before. It was an Iron Cross of the First Class. She stared at it, fascinated, for a moment, then shuddered and dropped it back into the envelope.

She looked over the thin sheets of paper, but could make nothing of them; she then turned back to the first letter that had come to light. The sheets were open and she felt no hesitancy about reading them.

What Sahwah read sent her heart wildly pounding against her throat. "Atterbury?" "Strikes?"---and signed by Prince Karl Augustus of Hohenburg? This must be the very letter that was stolen from Mr. Wing's desk---the letter they

accused Veronica of taking! Eugene Prince, the artist, had taken it and hidden it under the lining of his sketch book. But no one had ever thought of suspecting him! He had been so sure that Veronica was an enemy agent, and here he was one himself! She had been right after all, Veronica was innocent, and her faith in her had not been betrayed. For a moment that one great dazzling fact blotted out all other facts. It was not too late yet to save Veronica from internment. She must get to Mr. Wing as fast as she could with her great discovery. She must----Here Sahwah looked down, and directly into the face of Eugene Prince, standing on the ground beside the tree, his eye on the portfolio and the articles spread out in her lap. For a moment "they looked at each other, tense, speechless, then the artist sprang into the tree, snatched the portfolio and the letter away from her and darted away into the woods. Stunned by surprise Sahwah slid limply to the ground, vainly looking around to see where the artist had gone. The woods had swallowed him. At Sahwah's feet lay the gilt-lettered ship's ribbon, the letter addressed to Waldemar von Oldenbach and the thin sheets of paper, and in her hand she still clutched the bottom half of one of the pages of the stolen letter, the half that bore the prince's signature and the name of Atterbury in one of the lines."

CHAPTER XX

ANOTHER'S SECRET

"Tell me something about this artist who called himself Eugene Prince," said Lieutenant Allison, who, propped up in bed with Mr. Wing and the Winnebagos around him, had been looking over the contents of the sketching portfolio which Sahwah had just brought in.

Mr. Wing, still dazed from the shock of learning that the man he had looked upon as such a good friend had played him false, described the artist as well as he could. The lieutenant listened with a puzzled frown until he heard about the funny little drawings that the artist used to make, and then he interrupted with a triumphant exclamation.

"That's he!" he exclaimed. "The very same! Eugene Prince is Waldemar von Oldenbach himself!"

Then he told about him.

"Waldemar von Oldenbach! His father is a German count, his mother was an American. He was educated in England and afterward came to America and entered Cornell. That's where I met him. He was the cleverest scapegrace that ever lived. He could sing like an angel, draw like St. Peter, and knew more languages than an Ellis Island interpreter. He made friends wherever he went. To look at him and hear him talk you would never think he was a German; he's the picture of his American mother, and being in England so much he had learned English perfectly. At the same time he could make himself up like a Frenchman and you'd swear that he and all his ancestors were born in the shadow of Notre Dame. He was a great old actor, all right. After he'd been in America a year or so he went back to Germany and entered the navy and became a first lieutenant on the *Eitel Friederich*. That's where he was when the war broke out and the *Eitel Friederich* was interned. But Von Oldenbach wasn't interned with her, not much. He got away before they had a chance to photograph him and label him, and so no official search was ever made for him as it was in the cases of the other sailors from the *Eitel Friederich* who escaped. I have often wondered what became of him, because I knew he was on the *Eitel Friederich* when she first came into port, but his name didn't show up among the ship's officers when they were interned. Someone on board said he had died the day before the ship was seized and that was all anybody knew about him. He must have been quietly cruising around the country ever since, disguised and posing as an artist, working himself into one locality after another where he could get information that was of service to his fatherland. These drawings here are mostly of airplane parts which he's picked up in various places and his sketches are mostly all rivers and bridges.

"Eugene Prince, indeed! '*Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter,*' that's what they used to call him in college, after an old student song. He had such winning ways he could take up with anybody. Nobody on earth was proof against his charm. You see how it has worked with yourself, Mr. Wing. He made himself such a delightful companion, and became of such real service to you in your work of trailing enemy agents that you never suspected he wasn't the most patriotic American alive. You would have staked your soul on it. When he found out you had this letter which tied up old Prince Karl Augustus with your strike case, he managed to get it away from you and so scored one for the Prince, who is a good friend of his. At the same time he was clever enough to throw suspicion over onto this little Hungarian girl friend of yours, and if this goat hadn't butted in just at the right time he probably never would have been found out. As it is, he'll probably never be caught now. He's too clever. He'll fool the officers yet, as he's done before." Sleep came slowly to the girls that night, there had been so much excitement during the day, but one by one they dropped off at last, even Sahwah, who was so wide awake she thought she would never sleep again. Sometime after midnight the doorbell rang, a loud, ferocious peal that clanged through the silent house like a fire alarm and fetched Sahwah sitting upright in bed with a beating heart. "What's that?" came in a startled tone from Hinpoha's room.

"The doorbell," answered Sahwah, jumping out of bed and putting on her slippers. The other girls were awake by this time, calling to each other. The bell pealed again.

"Don't you go to the door!" cried Hinpoha hoarsely, as she saw Sahwah preparing to go down. "It may be the artist coming back to kill us. I've heard of such things. They come to the door at night and ring the doorbell and then they shoot you through the door when you open it. Don't you dare go down!"

"Oh-h-h-h-wow-w!" shrieked Gladys, with a smothered squeal, her nerves giving away beneath the shock of being wakened so suddenly from sound sleep, together with the picture of horror conjured up by Hinpoha's awful suggestion.

Fright overtook the rest of them then and they stood in a shivering group in the upper hall. Another peal clanged through the house, louder and more insistent than before.

"I'm going to see who's there," said Sahwah hardily. "Come on, all of you, come down with me."

"Wait until we get armed," said Hinpoha, casting about for something that would serve as a weapon of defense. There was nothing in sight but a two-quart bottle of spring water, which she picked up. Gladys went into the kitchen and picked up a frying pan, Sahwah climbed up on the mantel and pulled down the Revolutionary musket that hung there and brought down a three-foot sword for Migwan. It dropped with a clatter upon the hearthstone when Migwan tried to take it from her hand, and the four stood petrified with alarm. Another furious peal at the bell.

"Come on," whispered Sahwah. "I'll open the door a crack and you stand right behind me. I'm not going to turn on the light, because it's easier to rush out and make an attack in the dark." Holding their breath they approached the door with shaking knees. Sahwah turned the key in the lock as quietly as she could and opened the door a tiny crack. "Who's there?" she called in a bold voice, at the same time bringing her gun down on the floor with a warning bang.

"It's I, Nyoda," answered the dearest voice in the world. "Oh, I thought I'd *never* make you hear!"

The next minute she was inside the room and the light was switched on. One look at the four girls, armed to the teeth, and Nyoda doubled up on the stairs and laughed until she cried, while the Winnebagos looked sheepish and laid their weapons down in a hurry.

"Didn't you get my wire saying I was coming?" asked Nyoda in surprise. "I sent one yesterday saying I would reach Oakwood at eight to-night. Trains were delayed all along the line and I didn't get in until nearly one this morning."

"We never got any telegram," said Migwan.

"I suppose it'll get here to-morrow," said Nyoda resignedly. "The telegraph operator in St. Margaret's was also the postmaster, and I have a suspicion that he was also the expressman, and his messages piled up on him at times. I got your letter about Veronica yesterday and started for home immediately. Now tell me everything exactly as it happened."

She listened with wide-open eyes to the tale which Sahwah, assisted by the other three, poured out excitedly.

At the mention of Veronica's mysterious errands from the house, which had brought suspicion down upon her, Nyoda suddenly turned white and clutched the newel post for support.

"Oh, if I had only known!" she cried wildly. "If I had only been here! Oh, the poor, poor child, why didn't she tell?" Nyoda sank down on the stairs and buried her face in her hands, while the Winnebagos stood around with wondering, startled faces.

Then she looked up at the girls and began to speak.

"Girls," she said in an awed tone, "I simply can't find words to tell you what Veronica has done. No one could express in seven languages the depth of her loyalty to a friend. She has kept a promise of silence about a certain matter at a cost to herself that surpasses belief. But here and now I absolve her from that promise, and propose to tell you the whole matter which has so puzzled and tormented you with its mystery, although it is a matter I urgently wished to keep secret.

"You probably do not know that my husband has a younger brother, Clement, who was a brilliant scholar and a fine musician. His health had always been frail, and he overstudied in college, with the result that in the middle of his junior year he broke down altogether and was ill for a long time. Worry about his condition finally affected his mind and he became quite melancholy at times and mentally unbalanced. It was nothing permanent, the doctors said, and the mental trouble would pass away if he regained his health, but Clement was morbidly sensitive about it and was terribly afraid people would find it out and consider him crazy all the rest of his life, and that his career would be ruined by it

"His distress was so keen that my husband brought him to a little cottage here on the outskirts of Oakwood that stands far back from one of the unfrequented roads, almost hidden by the trees, and established him there with a young doctor friend and an old housekeeper who had been in the family for years and had looked after Clem since he was a youngster. None of his friends knew where he was nor what was the matter with him, so he was safe from the publicity he feared. He began to improve with the quiet outdoor life he led, but still there were times when he grew so melancholy that they feared he would kill himself. He was passionately fond of violin music, and we soon found out he could be speedily brought out of his melancholy fits by the sound of his favorite instrument.

"So I brought Veronica down here this summer, and her playing worked a miracle every time. Whenever Clem grew despondent they would telephone for Veronica and she would go over and play for him. When she went out of the house in the daytime to go over, she went through the cellar passage that opens out into the spring house on the side of the hill, so you girls would not see her leaving with her violin."

A light broke in Sahwah's brain. That was why she had not heard Veronica going out of the front door that afternoon when she disappeared so mysteriously!

"But he usually had those spells at night," continued Nyoda, "because he was always sleepless, but no matter what time it was she would always go and play for him, and the magic strains of her violin would put him to sleep and drive away the melancholy. Of course, I asked her to keep the matter a secret, and never breathe a word about Clem's existence to

anybody, and she promised. How little did I guess what it was going to cost her to keep that secret!"

The Winnebagos looked at each other in wonder and awe at the thought of this fiery little wisp of nobility who would not break her word of honor even to clear herself of unjust suspicion. Then with one voice they broke out in a wild cheer of admiration and acclaim that sent the echoes flying through the quiet old house:

"Oh, Veronica, here's to you,
Our hearts will e'er be true,
We will never find your equal
Though we search the whole world through !"

CHAPTER XXI

"In consequence of distinguished service rendered your country, I hereby grant you a full and unconditional pardon!" Nyoda, as leader of the Court Martial, addressed these thrilling words to Kaiser Bill, who stood in the center of a solemn conclave, gathered on the lawn of Carver House to reverse the death sentence passed upon him two weeks before. Once more the Winnebagos had a heart for nonsense, for Veronica stood in their midst again, cleared from every breath of suspicion. She and Sahwah stood with their arms around each other, laughingly looking on at the process of unsentencing Kaiser Bill to death. Slim and the Captain were there, too, come to say good-bye to the girls before leaving their tent in the woods. They had finished their surveying job and were moving on that day. They arrived on the scene just as the Court Martial sat to act upon the Kaiser's pardon. Kaiser Bill received the news of his pardon without emotion, hardly looking at his pardoners, and evincing a great show of interest in the process of paving the street in front of Carver House, which was going on at the time.

"He's got his eye on those bricks out there, and the first thing you know he'll be out there trying to eat them," said Nyoda with a comical sigh, realizing how impossible it was to interest the Kaiser in anything, even a thing so momentous as his own pardon, when there was anything in sight that looked as if it might be good to eat.

Nyoda laughed and went on with the ceremony as mapped out beforehand. "And in further consideration of the great service you have rendered your country, this court has decided to change your name from Kaiser Bill to Sherlock Holmes, as more fitting your great detective skill. Never again will you hear the hateful name of 'Kaiser Bill' applied to yourself. Sherlock Holmes, we salute you!" The Winnebagos raised their right hands in formal salute.

"Furthermore," continued Nyoda, "we have decided-----"

"There he goes!" shrieked Sahwah, as the newly christened Sherlock Holmes broke away from their flattering midst, cleared the fence at a bound and made straight for the pile of bricks that had started his mouth to watering.

"He'll get run over if he doesn't look out!" shouted the Captain as a truck loaded with sand rapidly approached the brick pile. "Hi, there, look out!" he called warningly.

But the warning came too late, for Sherlock Holmes was already under the wheels, with the whole weight of the truck on top of him, and by the time it had come to a stop he was a limp, lifeless wreck of a goat.

The Winnebagos flocked out into the street and looked at his remains, and almost wept as poor old Hercules heartbrokenly lifted up the body of his slain darling. The Italian laborers threw down their tools and gathered around them and a crowd collected from all sides.

"Why didn't you turn aside?" exclaimed the Captain to the driver of the truck, who seemed to be the only one not sorry about the accident, and muttered angrily in answer to the Captain's question. He looked defiantly at the Winnebagos and at Hercules fondling the dead goat, and then he actually laughed at them. "Serves the beast right," he muttered, and Sahwah, looking indignantly at him, saw that his left hand reached up for his ear, pulled down the lobe and released it with a jerk. A little electric thrill went through Sahwah at the sight of that gesture. There was only one person she had ever seen do that. That person was the artist, Eugene Prince. In spite of the black matted hair that covered the man's forehead, in spite of the black beard that covered the lower half of his face, the tattered cap, the blue shirt and shabby working clothes covered with red brick dust, something seemed to tell her that this was the man the federal officers were now searching for high and low.

"That's the spy!" she shouted at the top of her voice, to the utter amazement of the others, but the driver started as if he had been shot.

Immediately Slim and the Captain jumped on him and he fought like a tiger to get free. Others in the crowd came to the rescue and before long Waldemar von Oldenbach was safely locked up, minus his black wig and false beard, awaiting the arrival of Agent Sanders. With his native cunning he had decided that the safest place for him was to stay right in Oakwood after the discovery of the contents of his sketching portfolio, because everyone would think he would try to escape. So he had disguised himself as a foreign laborer and joined a gang that was paving the street, the last place where anyone would look for him, and he would probably never have been discovered if he had not run down the goat that had discovered his secret in the first place. Even then, no one would ever have looked for Waldemar von Oldenbach in the person of that swarthy, unkempt laborer, if it had not been for the sharp eyes of Sahwah the Sunfish, who noticed everything, and never forgot anything she saw. Her remembering the peculiar gesture of the artist had been his undoing.

Sahwah was once more the heroine of the Winnebagos. "How did you ever do it?" said Hinpoha enviously.

"Oh, I just noticed it," replied Sahwah without laying any claim whatever to detective ability. Sahwah's ability to talk about her achievements was as short as her power to think and act was long.

When Agent Sanders came to Oakwood to take the artist away with him he asked to see the Winnebagos and complimented them all highly upon the help they had given in catching the wily lieutenant, von Oldenbach. "I wish to express the thanks of the government," he said formally, "in consequence of the distinguished service rendered your country-----"

Sahwah giggled out loud, and Agent Sanders paused and looked at her with an inquiring expression.

"That's just what Nyoda said to Kaiser Bill!" said Sahwah, with another giggle. Then they all laughed, and the Winnebagos discovered that Agent Sanders' eyes were as kindly as they were sharp.

The Winnebagos held a jubilee that night on the Council Rock with Nyoda. She was going back to St. Margaret's in a few days because Sherry would be in the hospital for some time yet and she wanted to be with him until he was well, so the visit of the Winnebagos to Carver House had come to a close. Lieutenant Allison had been taken back to his camp that afternoon, right after he had seen and identified Lieutenant von Oldenbach. He still wore Sahwah's picture around his neck when he left, but it was now inclosed in Sahwah's own locket, and there was a fresh entry in his address book, as there was also in Sahwah's. The smashed plane had been taken away from the Devil's Punch Bowl and there was nothing in the placidly murmuring water to hint at the tragedy that had almost taken place. High up over the water, on the Council Rock, the Winnebagos held solemn ceremonial.

"Well," said Hinpoha in a tone of deep satisfaction, "the Winnebagos have done their bit. I take it all back about things never happening out of books and girls never having a chance to do anything for their country. We've had our chance, and we've gone over the top!" she proclaimed triumphantly.

The faces of all the Winnebagos shone with satisfied ambition.

"It was all true, the fortune you told Sahwah," said Migwan in a hushed voice. "The other man came into her life, too, the man who was light first and dark afterward!"

"I told you so!" exclaimed Hinpoha triumphantly.

"Talking about 'going over the top,'" said Nyoda seriously, when the murmur of wonder over Hinpoha's marvelous powers of prophecy had died away, "I think that two of you Winnebagos have 'gone over the top' on little excursions of your own, and ought to be decorated for courageous conduct under fire. Veronica Lehar, you have shown a strength of character before which we bow in humble admiration, and from this day on you shall be called Torch Bearer." Then she added fervently, "May we all love this country of ours as much as you do!"

Veronica turned great shining eyes on Nyoda, and her swiftly rising emotions almost choked her. Her great love for her new country had never failed, even though that country had looked upon her suspiciously. "The light of liberty that had been given to me I will pass undimmed unto others!" she exclaimed fervently.

"And this girl, too, has proved her mettle," said Nyoda, drawing Oh-Pshaw to her side and smiling into her wondering eyes. Oh-Pshaw had told Nyoda how she had sung to forget about the gurgling water in the Punch Bowl and how all of a sudden she had not been afraid any more, but she herself never realized what she had accomplished that night, and did not connect it at all with what Nyoda was saying now.

Then Nyoda related to the girls how Oh-Pshaw had fought with Fear down there in the darkness all alone, fought with the fear that was in her bones and had always mastered her, and how for the sake of another she had conquered it and was now free from its strangling clutch. She told them how the fear had come into Oh-Pshaw and what a great victory it was that she had won over herself down there beside the Devil's Punch Bowl.

"And for that victory over yourself you shall also be known as Torch Bearer, for she who conquers herself for the sake of others is worthy to lead others."

Oh-Pshaw stared at her blankly, unbelievably for a moment, and then a great joy came into her face when she realized that she had achieved her heart's desire.

"Oh, Nyoda!" was all she said, but Nyoda understood, and the other Torch Bearers, having had that same emotion themselves once upon a time, also understood.

Agony stared down steadily into her lap. She had experienced the first great jolt of her life. For the first time in her life Oh-Pshaw had gone up above her. For the first time she realized that there were qualities in others that counted more than her own brilliant gift of leading the crowd without effort. For the first time she had come up against something that she could not get by demanding it, something that had to be won by honest, painful effort. At first astonishment that she had not been named filled her to the exclusion of all other emotions, then she felt terribly humiliated, and then, as she began to think of the qualities she *didn't* possess she began to feel very humble. Nyoda watched her closely and knew just about what was taking place in her mind. There was wonderful stuff in Agony, she knew, and as soon as the right spirit guided her she would make a leader beyond compare. So Nyoda had given her this great jolt to-night, knowing that

it was the thing she needed to set her facing around in the right direction. She walked beside Agony as they went home through the woods, talking cheerfully all the way, and made no comment on Agony's unusual silence. Agony shed some tears into her pillow that night after Oh-Pshaw was asleep in the bed beside her, smiling happily in the moonlight that streamed in through the window. Then her gameness came to the top and she made up her mind to let Oh-Pshaw make the most of her one triumph over her and not spoil it by acting jealous.

"And some day I'll do something myself that will make me worthy to be called Torch Bearer," she resolved as she reached under the pillow for a dry handkerchief.

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Sahwah stood before the portrait of Elizabeth Carver in the long drawing room, paying her fare-well visit. The suitcases of the departing Winnebagos were piled on the porch outside, waiting for the moment of departure. The great air of respect and deference, tinged with envy, that Sahwah had heretofore worn when she addressed Elizabeth Carver had given way to an air of conscious equality.

"Elizabeth," said Sahwah solemnly, "I've had a romantic adventure, too. We're twins now, you and I. I don't believe I'd care to go back and change places with you after all; a modern girl has so much more chance for adventure! Life is very interesting, Elizabeth, and I'm *so* thankful to have been a part of things that were happening."

Her mind went back over all the events that had taken place since the first time she had stood in the long drawing room at Carver House and looked up at the picture of Elizabeth Carver.

"Hasn't it been a summer, though!" she said with a reminiscent sigh. "What *do* you suppose will happen next?"

And Elizabeth Carver, looking down from her frame, smiled knowingly.

THE END