

Roy Lillian Elizabeth

The Woodcraft Girls at Camp



Lillian Roy

The Woodcraft Girls at Camp

«Public Domain»

Roy L.

The Woodcraft Girls at Camp / L. Roy — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER ONE	5
CHAPTER TWO	14
CHAPTER THREE	22
CHAPTER FOUR	30
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	35

Roy Lillian Elizabeth The Woodcraft Girls at Camp

CHAPTER ONE THE CHOSEN LAND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nita said nothing, but thought over the unexpected news.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No danger of your mother dropping in that way," giggled Zan. "Our farm is a hundred and fifty miles from here, on a branch of an old-time railroad. When you reach the last station you still

have to ride ten miles in a springless wagon over rough roads. Ha, ha! I see any of your mothers anxious to visit you after that!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, indeedy!" added Zan.

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

"Car! What for?" wondered Zan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER TWO

CHOOSING A CAMP SITE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Miss Miller watched her and waited.

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

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

Zan stared off into the darkness and pondered this.

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

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

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

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

"The morning has work of its own – any one who would eat must earn! You may leave the dishes till morning if you choose but then there will be no breakfast for that one who shirks!" said Miss Miller, a suggestion of authority in her tones.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Why, just this, dears. We have had our food to nourish the body that must act at the suggestion of thought, and for this blessing we are grateful; for a weak, or impoverished body does not respond to the command of thought, no matter how willing it may be to act. After filling the receptacle for food one should not give way to lethargy – a common fault and inclination. Lethargy forms fat and soft muscles! Express your thanks to your thought and the benefit food gives the body, by obeying whatever dictates thought gives you for the perfect circulation of conditions. The dish-washing is a natural sequence of events following supper. So, I interpret it that thought has this work for us to do which will be sufficient exercise for us after a light supper. The very sense of having *done* with apparent duties for the night, will give your thought a comfortable relaxation while you sleep. The nagging idea that some work has been slighted or postponed, even though you may not be conscious of its effect upon you, will, nevertheless, cause a mental shrinkage and this in turn will draw your facial muscles into knots, and also cause unpleasant dreams. One who seeks repose with the sense of having completed all of the day's work with as conscientious application as is possible to him, will always find perfect rest in a sleep that renews one's physical being."

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER THREE

DISCOVERY OF THE "THINKERATOR"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Last summer Fiji had the chicken-raising fever and we let him have the carriage-house for his venture. He succeeded, too, but Fall came and we had to go back to the city. He had sold half his

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When the dishes had been washed and placed in the closet Miss Miller advised each one to unpack what baggage had been brought by hand the day before. The clothes worn on the journey down to the farm were to be carefully hung in the closets upstairs and the ordinary gymnasium uniforms worn until their costumes were completed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I find that a child that depends upon the mother to help it out of difficulties never advances like the one who has to work his own problems. I believe that one reason our city newsboys are so

clever is just because they must depend upon their own wits. It puts a sharp edge on wits – using them for oneself."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This put an end to health discussions at the time, and the girls raced after the horse before she could get too far away from them. It was a simple matter to haul the outfit from the barn to the Bluff,

and Zan plumed herself upon the idea that made them hide behind the trees to watch the teacher and discover her plan to move the baggage to the Bluff.

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

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

"Couldn't be better!" added Elena.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Doesn't any one here eat potatoes?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The old potato furnishes starch for the new growth to feed upon and before the young potatoes form under ground the old one is dried up by the use of its starch. The green leaves send down nourishment in turn for the young potatoes at the end of the stem, until they have attained their growth in the Fall.

"Potatoes used to be grown from seed that formed in the small pod left when the blossoms fell off. But growing potatoes from tubers of old ones was so much quicker, and saved so much labour, that a crisis has been reached in the present day. The potatoes are now unable to produce seed! No seed is to be had for general use. Last year an offer of several hundred dollars was made for a thimble-

full of potato seed, and do you know, girls, that not a farmer in the United States could procure enough potato seed to win that prize offer!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER FOUR

TRIBULATIONS OF THE CAMPERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We must have a Tally Book for the general use of the Band, and each girl ought to have one of her own. I saw one that belonged to a member of the Council and it was a work of beauty. As Elena is artistic by natural talent, I suggest that she take charge of our Band's Tally Book. Each one ought to take such a pride in her individual book that it shall merit an honour at Headquarters when it is displayed – but this is a matter for personal ambition. The Keeper of the Tally Book fills the place of secretary in other organisations, so I would advise Elena to make a memo of the minutes of this meeting. I have a book made up for general use, but a piece of paper will do now, to make notes upon. From that you can copy the minutes correctly and decorate the real book as elaborately as you like."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I think so too!" added Jane.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.