

A Girl of the Lumberlost.

[Continued from page 6, Col. 3.] Wesley Sinton's heart gave one great leap in his breast. His face was whiter than the girl's now. "Was you praying out loud, honey?" he almost whispered.

"I might have said words," answered Elnora. "I know I do sometimes. I've never had any one to talk to, and I've played with and talked to myself all my life. You've caught me at it often, but it always makes mother angry when she does. She says it's silly. I forget and do it when I'm alone. But, Uncle Wesley, if I said anything last night you know it was the merest whisper, because I'd have been so afraid of waking mother. Don't you see? I sat up late and did two lessons."

Sinton was steadying himself. "I'll stop and examine the case as I come back," he said. "Maybe I can find some clew. That other—that was just accidental. It's a common expression. All the preachers use it. If I was going to pray that would be the very first thing I'd say."

The color came back to Elnora's face. "Did you tell your mother about this money, Elnora?" he asked. "No, I didn't," said Elnora. "It's dreadful not to, but I was afraid. You see, they are clearing the swamp so fast. Every year it grows harder to find things, and Indian stuff gets scarcer. I want to graduate, and that's four years unless I can double on the course. That means \$20 tuition each year and new books and clothes. There won't ever be so much at one time again—that I know. I just got to hang to my money. I was afraid to tell her for fear she would sell it for taxes, and she really must sell it for some cattle for that, mustn't she, Uncle Wesley?"

"On your life, she must!" said Wesley. "You put your little wad in the bank all safe and never mention it to a living soul. It don't seem right, but your case is peculiar. Every word you say is a true word. Each year you will get less from the swamp, and things everywhere will be scarcer. If you ever get a few dollars ahead, that can start your college fund. You know you are going to college, Elnora?"

"Of course I am," said Elnora. She jumped from the carriage and soon found that with her books, her lunch box and the box of arrow points she had a heavy load. She was almost to the bridge crossing the culvert when she heard the distressed screams of a child. Across an orchard of the suburbs came a small boy, after him a

big dog, urged by a man in the background. Elnora's heart was with the small dying figure in any event whatever. She dropped her load on the bridge and with practiced hand caught up a stone and flung it at the dog. The beast curled double with a howl. The boy reached the fence, and Elnora was there to help him over. As he touched the top she swung him to the ground, but he clung to her, clasping her tightly, sobbing and shivering with fear. Elnora carried him to the bridge and sat with him in her arms. For a time his replies to her questions were indistinct, but at last he became quieter and she could understand.

He was a mite of a boy, nothing but skin covered bones, his burned, freckled face in a mortar of tears and dust, his clothing unspeakably dirty, one great toe in a festering mass from a broken nail and sores all over the visible portions of the small body. "You wouldn't set a dog on a boy for just taking a few old apples when you fed 'em to pigs with a shovel every day, would you?" he said.

"No, I would not," said Elnora hotly. "You'd give a boy all the apples he wanted if he hadn't any breakfast and was so hungry he was all twisty inside, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would," said Elnora. "If you had anything to eat you would give me something right now, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," said Elnora. "There's nothing but just stones in the package. But my dinner is in that case. I'll gladly divide."

She opened the box. The famished child gave a little cry and reached both hands. Elnora caught them back.

"Did you have any supper?" "No." "Any dinner yesterday?" "An apple and some grapes I stole."

"Whose boy are you?" "Old Tom Billings'."

"Why don't your father get you something to eat?" "He does most days, but he's drunk now."

"Hush! You must not!" said Elnora. "He's your father?" "He's spent all the money to get drunk, too," said the boy, "and Jimmy and Belle are both crying for breakfast. I'd 'st' got out all right with an apple for myself, but I tried to get some for them, and the dog got too close. Say, you can just throw, can't you?"

"Yes," admitted Elnora. She poured half the milk into the cup. "Drink this," she said, holding it to him.

The boy gulped the milk and swore joyously, gripping the cup with shaking fingers. "Hush!" cried Elnora. "That's dreadful!" "What's dreadful?" "To say such awful words."

Elnora stared into the quaint little face and saw that the child was older than she had thought. He might have been forty by his hard, unchildish expression.

"Do you want to be like your father?" "No; I want to be like you. Couldn't a angel be prettier 'an you! Can I have more milk?"

Elnora emptied the flask. The boy drained the cup. He drew a breath of satisfaction as he gazed into her face.

"You wouldn't go off and leave your little boy, would you?" he asked. "Did some one go away and leave you?" questioned Elnora in return. "Yes; my mother went off and left me and left Jimmy and Belle, too," said the boy. "You wouldn't leave your little boy, would you?"

"No." The boy looked eagerly at the box. Elnora lifted a sandwich and uncovered the fried chicken. The boy gasped with delight.

"Say, I could eat the stuff in the glass and the other box and carry the bread and the chicken to Jimmy and Belle," he offered.

Elnora silently uncovered the custard with preserved cherries on top and handed it and the spoon to the child. Never did food disappear faster. The salad went next, and a sandwich and half a chicken breast followed.

"I better leave the rest for Jimmy and Belle," he said. "They're 'st fightin' hungry."

Elnora gave him the remainder of the carefully prepared lunch. The boy clutched it and ran with a sidewise hop like a wild thing.

Elnora covered the dishes and cup, polished the spoon, replaced it and closed the beautiful case. She caught her breath in a tremulous laugh.

"If Aunt Margaret knew that she'd never forgive me," she said. "It seems as if secrecy is literally forced upon me, and I hate it. What will I do for lunch? I'll have to go sell my arrows and keep enough money for a restaurant sandwich."

So she walked hurriedly into town, sold her points at a good price, deposited her funds and went away with a neat little bank book and the note from the Lumberlost carefully folded inside. Elnora passed down the great hall that morning, and no one paid the slightest attention to her. The truth was she looked so like every one else that she was perfectly inconspicuous. But in the coat room there were members of her class. Surely no one intended it, but the whisper was too loud.

"Look at the girl from the Lumberlost in the clothes that woman gave her!"

Elnora turned on them. "I beg your pardon," she said unsteadily; "I couldn't help hearing that! No one gave me these clothes. I paid for them myself."

Some one muttered, "Pardon me," but incredulous faces greeted her. Elnora felt driven. "Aunt Margaret selected them, and she meant to give



"Drink this," she said, holding it to him.

them to me," she explained, "but I wouldn't take them. I paid for them myself." There was a dead silence.

"Don't you believe me?" panted Elnora.

"Really, it is none of our affair," said another girl. "Come on; let's go."

Elnora stepped before the girl who had spoken. "You have made this your affair," she said, "because you told a thing which was not true. No one gave me what I am wearing. I paid for my clothes myself with money I earned selling moths to the Bird Woman. I just came from the bank where I deposited what I did not use. Here is my credit." Elnora drew out and offered the little red book. "Surely you will believe that," she said.

"Why, of course," said the girl who first had spoken. "We met such a lovely woman in Brownlee's store, and she said she wanted our help to buy some things for a girl, and that's how we came to know."

"Dear Aunt Margaret," said Elnora. "It was like her to ask you. Isn't she splendid?"

"She is indeed," chorused the girls. Elnora set down her lunch box and books and unpinched her hat, hanging it beside the others. While her back was turned into the room came the girl of her encounter on the first day, waiked to the rack and, with an exclamation of approval, took down Elnora's hat.

"Just the thing I have been want-

ing," she said. "I never saw such beautiful quills in all my life. They match my new broadcloth to perfection. I've got to have that kind of quills for my hat. I never saw the like. Whose is it, and where did it come from?"

No one said a word, for Elnora's question, the reply and her answer had gone the rounds of the high school. Every one knew that the Lumberlost girl had come on ahead, and Sadie Reed had not felt comfortable when the little flourish had been added to Elnora's name in the algebra class. Elnora's swift glance was pathetic, but no one helped her. Sadie Reed glanced from the hat to the faces around her and wondered.

"Why, this is the freshman section. Whose hat is it?" she asked again, this time impatiently.

"That's the tassel of the cornstalk," said Elnora, with a forced laugh. The response was genuine. Every one shouted. Sadie Reed blushed, but she laughed also.

"Well, it's beautiful," she said, "especially the quills. They are exactly what I want. I know I don't deserve any kindness from you, but I do wish you would tell me at whose store you got those quills."

"Gladly," said Elnora. "You can't get quills like those at a store. They are from a living bird. Phoebe Simms gathers them in her orchard as her peacocks shed them. They are wing quills from the males."

Then there was a perfect silence. How was Elnora to know that not a girl there would have told that?

"I haven't a doubt but I can get you some," she offered. "She gave Aunt Margaret a great bunch, and those are part of them. I am quite sure she has more and would spare some."

Sadie Reed laughed shortly. "You needn't trouble," she said, "I was foolish. I thought they were expensive quills. I wanted them for a twenty dollar velvet toque to match my new suit. If they are picked off the ground, really, I couldn't use them."

"Only in spots," said Elnora. "They don't just cover the earth. Phoebe Simms' peacocks are the only ones within miles of Onabasha, and they moult but once a year. If your hat only cost \$20 it's hardly good enough for those quills. You see, the Almighty made and colored those himself, and he puts the same kind on Phoebe Simms' peacocks that he put on the head of the family in the forests of Ceylon away back in the beginning. Any old manufactured quill from New York or Chicago will do for your little twenty dollar hat. You ought to have something infinitely better than that to be worthy of quills that are made by the Creator."

How those girls did laugh! One of them walked by Elnora to the auditorium, sat with her during exercises and tried to talk whenever she dared to keep Elnora from seeing the curious and admiring looks bent upon her.

For the brown eyed boy whistled, and there was pantomime of all sorts going on behind Elnora's back that day. Happy with her books no one knew how much she saw, and from her absorption in her studies it was evident she cared too little to notice. It soon developed that to be inconspicuous and to work was all Elnora craved.

After school she went again to the home of the Bird Woman, and together they visited the swamp and took away more specimens. This time Elnora asked the Bird Woman to keep the money until noon of the next day, when she would call for it and have it added to her bank account. She slowly walked home, for the visit to the swamp had brought back full force the experience of the morning. Again and again she examined the crude little note, for she did not know what it meant, yet it bred vague fear.

[Continued next week.]

The Motive.

It was an evening party. A young man with a tall collar and pale hair was reciting a poem. He had ground out forty-seven stanzas—and the end was not yet.

"What's going on?" whispered the guest who had just come in. "Rhymers is letting out his latest poem," answered the pessimistic person.

"What's the subject—the motive?" queried the latecomer. "I have forgotten the subject," replied the P. P., "but I suspect the motive must be revenge."—Tit-Bits.

She Was Frigid.

"It must be a rather unpleasant experience to bump into an iceberg," observed the man from Milwaukee, who was lounging in the smoking room of a transatlantic liner.

"It is," agreed the man from Denver. "You have had that experience, then?" "Yes."

"Crossing the pond?" "No. Crossing Boston Common."

Strange Taste.

Miss Eleanor Sears of Boston started staid San Mateo by going on a shopping tour on a bicycle clad in checkered trouserets. — Washington Post.

But why should a San Mateo bicycle wear checkered trouserets?—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Why should Miss Eleanor Sears wear checkered trouserets?

Artist Regains Drawings.

M. Ducas, the French artist whose paintings when bought by M. Quittner and signed by him, won their new owner honors at the salons where the original painter failed even to get them accepted, has succeeded in regaining 29 of the pictures.

CLOTHING.

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