

A GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST

By GENE STRATTON-PORTER

Copyright, 1909, by Doubleday, Page & Co.

SYNOPSIS

Although a good scholar, Elnora Comstock, entering high school, is ashamed by her country dress.

When Elnora was born her father was drowned in a swamp, emitting her mother's life.

Mrs. Comstock's devotion to her husband's memory will not permit her to sell trees or have oil wells dug on her land.

Elnora is delighted with her outfit. Her mother says she must pay for it.

Pete Corson, a Limberlost frequenter, warns Elnora not to visit the Limberlost at night or go far into the swamp at any time.

Billy, a bright but untrained little chap, with a shiftless father and hungry brother and sister, gets Elnora's luncheon.

Sinton finds some one has been spying on Elnora. The girl feeds Billy again. She is "taken up" by the high school girls.

[Continued from last week.]

CHAPTER VIII

Wherein Mrs. Comstock indulges in "Frits" and Billy Reappears.

It was Wesley Sinton who really wrestled with the problem as he drove about his business.

He did not have to ask himself what it meant; he knew. The old Corson gang was still holding together.

Elder members who had escaped the law had been joined by a younger brother of Jack's, and they met in the thickest of the few remaining fast places of the swamp to drink, gamble and loaf.

Then, suddenly, there would be a robbery in some country house where a farmer that day had sold his wheat or corn and not paid a visit to the bank, or in some neighboring village.

The home of Mrs. Comstock and Elnora adjoined the swamp. Sinton's land lay next, and not another residence or man easy to reach in case of trouble.

Whoever wrote that note had some human kindness in his breast, but the fact stood revealed that he feared his strength if Elnora was delivered into his hands.

Where had he been the previous night when he heard that prayer? Was that the first time he had been in such proximity? Sinton drove fast, for he wished to reach the swamp before Elnora and the Bird Woman would go there for more moths.

At almost 4 he came to the case, and dropping on his knees studied the ground, every sense alert. He found two or three little heel prints.

Those were made by Elnora or the Bird Woman. What Sinton wanted to learn was whether all the rest were the footprints of one man. It was easily seen they were not.

There were deep, even tracks made by fairly new shoes, and others where a well worn heel cut deeper on the inside of the print than at the outer edge.

Undoubtedly some of Corson's old gang were watching the case and the visits of the women to it. There was no danger that anyone would attack the Bird Woman.

She never went to the swamp at night, and on her trips in the daytime every one knew that she carried a revolver, understood how to use it and pursued her work in a fearless manner.

Sinton was afraid for Elnora, yet he did not want to add the burden of fear to Katharine Comstock's trouble or to disturb the joy of Elnora in her work.

He stopped at the cabin and slowly went up the walk. Mrs. Comstock was sitting on the front step with some sewing. She dropped her work on her lap, laid her hands on it and looked into his face with a sneer.

"You didn't let any grass grow under your feet," she said.

Sinton saw her white, drawn face and comprehended.

"I went to pay a debt and see about this opening of the ditch, Kate."

"You said you were going to prosecute me."

"Good gracious, Kate!" cried Sinton. "Is that what you have been thinking all day? I told you before I left yesterday that I would not need do that. I want to ask you if you ever see anything about the swamp that makes you think the old Corson gang is still alive?"

"Can't say that I do," said Mrs. Comstock. "There's kind of dancing lights there sometimes, but I supposed it was just people passing along the road with lanterns."

"Kate, I have got to tell you something. Elnora stopped at the case this morning, and somebody had been into it in the night."

"Broke the lock?"

"No. Used a duplicate key. Today I heard there was a man here last night. I want to nose around a little."

Sinton went to the east end of the cabin and looked up at the window.

There was no way any one could have reached it without a ladder, for the logs were hewed and mortar filled the cracks even.

Then he went to the west end. The willow faced him as he turned the corner. He examined the trunk carefully. There was no mistake about small particles of black swamp muck adhering to the sides of the tree.

He reached the low branches and climbed the willow. There was earth on the large limb crossing Elnora's window. He stood on it, holding the branch as had been done the night before, and looked into the room. He could see very little, but he knew that if it had been dark outside and sufficiently light for Elnora to study inside he could have seen vividly. He brought his face close to the netting, and he could see the bed with its head to the east, at its foot the table with the candles and the chair before it, and then he knew where the man had been who had heard Elnora's prayer.

Mrs. Comstock had followed around the corner and stood watching him.

"Do you think some slinking bulk was up there peepin' in at Elnora?" she demanded indignantly.

"There is muck on the trunk and plenty on the limb," said Sinton.

"Hadin' you better get a saw and let me take this branch off?"

"No, I hadn't," said Mrs. Comstock. "First place, Elnora's climbed from that window on that limb all her life, and it's here; second place, no one gets ahead of me after I've had warning. Any crow that perches on that roost again will get its feathers somewhat scattered. Look along the fence there and see if you can find where he came in."

The place was easy to find as was a trail leading for some distance west of the cabin.

"You just go home and don't fret yourself," said Mrs. Comstock. "I'll take care of this. If you should hear the dinner bell at any time in the night you come down. But I wouldn't say anything to Elnora. She best keep her mind on her studies if she's going to school."

When the work was finished that night Elnora took her books and went to her room to prepare some lessons, but every few minutes she looked toward the swamp to see if there were lights near the case. Mrs. Comstock raked together the coals in the cooking stove, got out the lunch box, and sitting down, she studied it grimly. At last she arose.

"Wonder how it would do to show Mag Sinton a frill or two," she murmured.

Mrs. Comstock was up early and without a word handed Elnora the luncheon case as she left the next morning.

"Thank you, mother," said Elnora and went on her way.

She walked down the road, looking straight ahead until she came to the corner, where she usually entered the swamp. She paused, glanced that way and smiled. Then she turned and looked back. There was no one coming in any direction. She kept to the road until well around the corner, then she stopped and sat on a grassy spot, laid her books beside her and opened the lunch box. She scarcely could believe her senses. Half the bread compartment was filled with dainty sandwiches of bread and butter sprinkled with the yolk of egg and the rest with three large slices of the most fragrant spice cake imaginable. The meat dish contained shaved cold ham, of which she knew the quality; the salad was tomatoes and celery, and the cup held preserved pear, clear as amber. There was milk in the bottle, two tissue wrapped cucumber pickles in the folding drinking cup and a fresh napkin in the ring. No lunch was ever daintier or more palatable. Of that Elnora was perfectly sure. And her mother had prepared it for her.

She glanced around her and then to her old refuge, the sky. "She does love me," cried the happy girl. "Sure as you're born she loves me; she just hasn't found it out yet!"

She was to go to the Bird Woman's after school for the last load from the case. Saturday she would take the arrow points and specimens to the bank. That would exhaust her present supplies and give her enough money ahead to pay for books, tuition and clothes for at least two years. She would work early and late gathering nuts. In October she would sell all the ferns she could find. She must collect specimens of all tree leaves before they fell, gather nests and cocoons later and keep her eyes wide open for anything the grades could use. She would see the superintendent that night about selling specimens to the ward buildings. She must be ahead of anyone else if she wanted to furnish these things. So she approached the bridge.

That it was occupied could be seen from a distance. As she came up she found the small boy of yesterday awaiting her with a confident smile.

"We brought you something!" he announced without greeting. "This is Jimmy and Belle—and we brought you a present."

He offered a parcel wrapped in brown paper.

"Why, how lovely of you!" said Elnora. "I supposed you had forgotten me when you ran away so fast yesterday."

"Naw, I didn't forget you," said the boy. "I wouldn't forget you, not ever! Why, I was ist a-hurrying to take them things to Jimmy and Belle. My, they was glad!"

Elnora glanced at the children. They sat on the edge of the bridge, obviously clad in a garment each, very dirty and

unkempt, a little boy and a girl of about seven and nine. Elnora's heart began to ache.

"Say," said the boy. "ain't you going to look what we have zave you?"

"I thought it wasn't polite to look before people," answered Elnora. "Of course I will if you would like to have me."

Elnora opened the package. She had been presented with a quarter of a stale loaf of baker's bread and a big piece of ancient bologna.

"But don't you want this yourselves?" she asked in surprise.

"Gosh, no! I mean ist plain no," said the boy. "We always have it. We got stacks this morning. Pa's come out of it now, and he's so sorry he got more 'an ever we can eat. Have you had any before?"

"No," said Elnora. "I never did."

The boy's eyes brightened and the girl moved restlessly.

"We thought maybe you hadn't," said the boy. "First you ever have, you like it real well, but when you don't have anything else for a long time, years an' years, you git so tired."

He hitched at the string which held his trousers and eyed Elnora speculatively.

"I don't s'pose you'd trade what you got in that box for ist old bread and bologna now, would you? Mebby you'd like it! And I know, I ist know, what you got would taste like heaven to Jimmy and Belle. They never had nothing like that. Not even Belle, and she's most ten. No, sir-ee, they never tasted things like you got."

Elnora knelt on the bridge, opened the box and divided her lunch into three equal parts, the smaller boy getting most of the milk. Then she told them it was school time and she must go.

"Why don't you put your bread and bologna in the nice box?" asked the boy.

"Of course," said Elnora. "I didn't think."

When the box was arranged to the children's satisfaction all of them accompanied Elnora to the corner where she turned toward the high school. Elnora and Billy led the way, Jimmy and Belle followed.

"Billy," said Elnora. "I would like you much better if you were cleaner. Surely you have water. Can't you children get some soap and wash yourselves? Gentlemen are never dirty. You want to be a gentleman, don't you?"

"Is being clean all you have to do to be a gentleman?"

"No," said Elnora. "You must not say bad words and you must be kind and polite to your sister."

"Must Belle be kind and polite to me, else she ain't a lady?"

"Yes."

"Then Belle's no lady!" said Billy succinctly.

Elnora could say nothing more just then, and she bade them goodbye and started them home.

"The poor little souls!" she mused. "I think the Almighty put them in my way to show me real trouble. I won't be likely to spend much time pitying myself while I can see them."

[Continued on page 7, Col. 1.]

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets are the medicine for delicate persons. Their action is as gentle as effectual. They break up constipation without breaking down the person using them. Try them.

Many people express surprise after having tried many doctors and medicines to find quick relief in Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It is surprising, but it is a surprise which is taking place every day.

Mr. Edward Jacobs, of Marengo, Crawford Co., Indiana, writes: "After three years of suffering with liver trouble and malaria I gave up all hopes of ever getting stout again, and the last chance was to try your medicine. I had tried all the home doctors and received but little relief. After taking three bottles of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery and one vial of his 'Pleasant Pellets' I am stout and hearty. It is due entirely to your wonderful medicines."

Hood's Sarsaparilla.

Rheumatism IS A CONSTITUTIONAL DISEASE. It manifests itself in local aches and pains—inflamed joints and stiff muscles,—but cannot be cured by local applications. It requires constitutional treatment, and the best is a course of the great purifying and tonic medicine, Hood's Sarsaparilla, which corrects the acid condition of the blood and builds up the whole system.

I was suffering from rheumatism in my knees. A friend recommended Hood's Sarsaparilla in a short time the pains entirely ceased. Mrs. Mary J. Hill, 1023 W. Madison St., Louisville, Ky.

There is no real substitute for HOOD'S SARSAPARILLA. Get it today. In usual liquid form or chocolate tablets called Sarsatabs. 57-50.

Waverly Oils.

White Flame Full, clear—never flickers FAMILY FAVORITE The Best Lamp Oil At Your Dealer's.

For the sake of the family's eyes. FREE—320 page book—all about oil. WAVERLY OIL WORKS CO. Pittsburgh, Pa. Gasolene Lubricants

Magazines.

POPULAR MECHANICS

POPULAR MECHANICS Magazine

WRITTEN SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND IT! A GREAT Continued Story of the World's Progress which you may begin reading at any time, and which will hold your interest forever.

250 PAGES EACH MONTH 300 PICTURES 200 ARTICLES OF GENERAL INTEREST

The "Shop Notes" Department (20 pages) gives easy ways to do things—how to make useful articles for home and shop, repairs, etc.

"Amateur Mechanics" (10 pages) tells how to make Mission furniture, wireless outfits, boats, engines, magic, and all the things a boy loves.

\$1.50 PER YEAR. SINGLE COPIES 15 CENTS

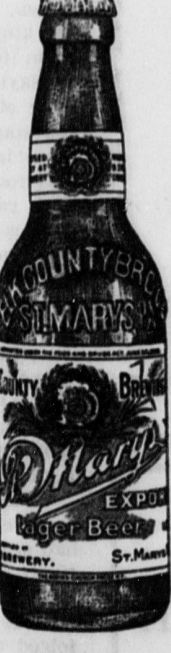
Ask your newsdealer, or WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLE COPY TODAY

POPULAR MECHANICS CO. 215 W. Washington St., CHICAGO

57-43-3c

St. Mary's Beer.

The sunshine of lager beer satisfaction radiates from every bottle of ELK COUNTY BREWING COMPANY'S EXPORT. Every glass is a sparkling draught of and is as pure as skill can produce.



Our ment is equipped latest mechanical and sanitary—the art of brewing recently installed a ment ranking Our sanitary illizing the bottles filled, and the of pasteurizing has been auto-guarantees the our product. We at the brewery, as exposure to light injures flavor.

ing draught of and is as pure as skill can produce. entire establish- with the very cal inventions vices known to ing, having re-bottling equip- second to none. methods of ster- before they are scientific process the beer after it matically bottled lasting purity of bottle our beer in AMBRE bot- tles, as exposure to light injures flavor.

Elk County Brewing Company ST. MARYS, PENNSYLVANIA

The Pennsylvania State College.

The : Pennsylvania : State : College EDWIN ERLE SPARKS, Ph.D., LL.D., PRESIDENT.

Established and maintained by the joint action of the United States Government and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

FIVE GREAT SCHOOLS—Agriculture, Engineering, Liberal Arts, Mining, and Natural Science, offering thirty-six courses of four years each—Also courses in Home Economics, Industrial Art and Physical Education—TUITION FREE to both sexes; incidental charges moderate.

First semester begins middle of September; second semester the first of February; Summer Session for Teachers about the third Monday of June of each year. For catalogue, bulletins, announcements, etc., address

57-26 THE REGISTRAR, State College, Pennsylvania.

Dry Goods, Etc.

LYON & COMPANY.

Christmas Suggestions.

Our stock was never so complete with Christmas Gifts as this season.

FURS.

Everything in Fur Sets for Ladies, Misses and Children. Also single Muffs.

SILKS.

If you are giving Silks, buy them here. All the newest shades in Charmeuse Crepe Meteors, Silk Crepe de Chines, Marquisettes, Brocades, Messalines, Habutal, Satins and Taffetas.

NEEDLEWORK.

This department is laden with excellent Christmas ideas. What nicer gift than a Hand embroidered Scarf or Centrepiece. Everything new and dainty in white, ecru and colors.

NECKWEAR.

Neckwear Suggestions which must appeal to all who wish to give a dainty gift. Collar and Cuff Sets in lace and embroidery. New effects in Stocks, Jabots and Bows. These Bows are especially attractive for the price. Men's Silk Knitted Neckwear in all the new styles and colorings.

HOSIERY.

Woman's Ingrain pure thread Silk Stockings, in medium and light weights. These Stockings are excellent values; 50c. to \$1.00, in black, white and tan.

KNIT GOODS.

The finest hand-knitted Wool Garments made, including Sweaters for Men, Women and Children. Baby Sacques, Aviation Caps, Gloves, Mittens and Toques.

HANDKERCHIEFS.

Ladies' all linen, hand-embroidered Handkerchiefs, from 15c. up. All Linen initial Handkerchiefs from 10c. up. Children's Cotton Handkerchiefs from 15c. a dozen up.

UMBRELLAS.

We have on display a fine line of new Umbrellas for Men, Women and Children, in silk and gloria.

LEATHER GOODS.

Hand Bags, Purses and Suit Cases, in all shapes, and at very low prices.

Special Reductions on all "La Vogue" Coats and Suits. Christmas shoppers can make a dollar go farther here than elsewhere. Shop Early. Shop Here.

Lyon & Co. Bellefonte

Shoes. Shoes.

Yeager's Shoe Store

Fitzezy

The Ladies' Shoe

that Cures Corns

Sold only at

Yeager's Shoe Store,

Bush Arcade Building, BELLEFONTE, PA.