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## The DAILY MAIL

## A GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST

By  
GENE STRATTON-PORTER

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(Continued.)

"Feels heavy," said Elnora gayly.

"And smelly!"

Elnora went down the road thinking of the children with whom she probably would divide. Of course, the bridge would be occupied again. So she stopped and opened the box. Undoubtedly Mrs. Comstock was showing Margaret Sinton the "frills." The cake was still fresh, and there were four slices. The sandwiches had to be tasted twice before Elnora discovered that beechnuts had been used in a peanut recipe, and they were a great improvement. There were preserved strawberries in the cup, potato salad with mint and cucumber in the dish and a beautifully browned squab from the stable loft.

"I don't want to be selfish," murmured Elnora, "but it just seems as if I can't give away this lunch. If mother did not put love into it she's substituted something that's likely to fool me."

She almost felt her steps lagging as she approached the bridge. A very hungry dog had been added to the trio of children. Elnora loved all dogs and, as usual, this one came to her in friendliness. The children said "Good morning!" with alacrity, and another paper parcel lay conspicuous.

"How are you this morning?" inquired Elnora.

"All right," cried the three, while the dog sniffed ravenously at the lunch box and beat a perfect tattoo with his tail.

"How did you like the bologna?" questioned Billy eagerly.

"One of the girls took me to lunch at her home yesterday," answered Elnora.

Dawn broke beautifully over Billy's streaked face. He caught the package and thrust it toward Elnora.

"Then maybe you'd like to try the bologna today!"

The dog leaped in glad apprehension of something, and Belle scrambled to her feet and took a step forward. The look of famished greed in her eyes was more than Elnora could bear. She opened the box and divided the milk between Billy and the girl. She gave each a piece of cake leaving one and a sandwich. Billy pressed forward eagerly, bitter disappointment on his face, and the elder boy forgot his charge.

"Aw, I thought they'd be meat!" lamented Billy.

Elnora gave way.

"There is," she said gladly. "There is a little pigeon bird. I want just a teeny piece of the breast, for a sort of keepsake, just one bite, and you can have the rest among you."

Elnora drew the knife from its holder and cut off the wishbone. Then she held the bird toward the girl.

"You can divide it," she said. The dog made a bound and seizing the squab sprang from the bridge and ran for life. The girl and boy hurried after him. With awful eyes Billy stared and swore tempestuously. Elnora



The Girls Scattered Before Him.

caught him and clapped her hand over the little mouth. A delivery wagon came tearing down the street, the horse running full speed, passed the fleeing dog with the girl and boy in pursuit and stopped at the bridge. High school girls began to roll from all sides of it.

"A rescue, a rescue!" they shouted. It was Ellen Brownlee and her crowd, and every girl of them carried a big parcel. They took in the scene as they approached. The fleeing dog, with something in its mouth, the half naked girl and boy chasing it, told the story. Those girls screamed with laughter as they watched the pursuit.

## WAS WEAK AND RUN DOWN. NOT ABLE TO DO HER WORK.

Many women get run down, and are unable to look after their household duties, owing to their nervous system becoming unstrung. Day in and day out they have to go through the same routine of work, sweeping, dusting, cooking, etc. No wonder their work gets on the nerves and they become run down.

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"Thank goodness, I saved the wishbone," said Elnora. "As usual, I can prove that there was a bird." She turned toward the box. Billy had improved the time. He had the last piece of cake in one hand and the last bite of salad disappeared in one great gulp. Then the girls shouted again.

"Let's have a sample ourselves," suggested one. She caught up the box and handed out the remaining sandwich. Another girl divided it into bites each little over an inch square, and then she lifted the cup lid and deposited a preserved strawberry on each bite. "One, two, three—altogether now!" she cried.

Billy let out a roar. "You old mean things!" he screamed.

In an instant he was down in the road and handfuls of dust began to fly among them. The girls scattered before him.

"Billy!" cried Elnora. "Billy! I'll never give you another bite as long as I live if you throw dust on any one!"

Then Billy dropped the dust, bored both fists into his eyes and fled sobbing into Elnora's new blue skirt. She stooped to meet him and consolation began.

After the luncheon was given to the three children Elnora was hustled into the wagon with the girls and driven on the run to the high school. They sang a song beginning,

Elnora, please give me a sandwich;  
I'm ashamed to ask for cake,

as they went on. Elnora did not know it, but that was her initiation. She belonged to "the crowd." She only knew that she was happy and vaguely wondered what her mother and Aunt Margaret would have said about the proceedings.

Saturday morning Elnora helped her mother with the work. When she had finished Mrs. Comstock told her to go to Sinton's and wash her Indian relics so that she would be ready to accompany Wesley to town in the afternoon. Elnora hurried down the road and was soon at the elstern with a tub busily washing arrow points, stone axes, tubes, pipes and skin cleaning implements. There were not so many points as she had supposed, and some she had thought the finest were chipped and broken. Still there was quite a large box of perfect pieces to carry to the city.

Then Elnora hurried home, dressed and was waiting when the carriage reached the gate. She stopped at the bank with the box, and Sinton went to do his marketing and a little shopping for his wife.

At the dry goods store Mr. Brownlee called to him: "Hello, Sinton! How do you like the fate of your lunch box?" Then he began to laugh.

"I always hate to see a man laughing alone," said Sinton. "It looks so selfish. Tell me the fun and let me help you."

Brownlee wiped his eyes. "I supposed you knew, but I see she hasn't told."

Then the three days' history of the lunch box was repeated with particulars which included the dog.

"Now laugh," concluded Brownlee. "Blessed if I see anything funny," replied Sinton. "And if you had bought that box and furnished one of those lunches yourself you wouldn't either. I call such a work a shame. I'll have it stopped."

"Some one must see to that, all right. They are little leeches. Their father earns enough to support them, but they have no mother, and they run wild. I suppose they are crazy for cooked food. But it is funny, and when you think it over you will see it if you don't now."

"About where would a body find that father?" inquired Sinton grimly. Mr. Brownlee told him, and he started, locating the house with little difficulty. House was the proper word, for of home there was no sign. Just a small empty house with three unkempt little children racing through and around it. The girl and the elder boy hung back, but dirty little Billy greeted Sinton with, "What you want here?"

"I want to see your father," said Sinton.

"Well, he's asleep," said Billy.

"Where?" asked Sinton.

"In the house," answered Billy, "and you can't wake him."

"All right," said Wesley.

(To be Continued)

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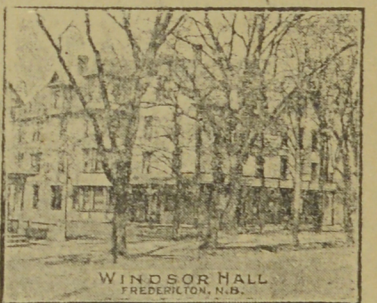
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