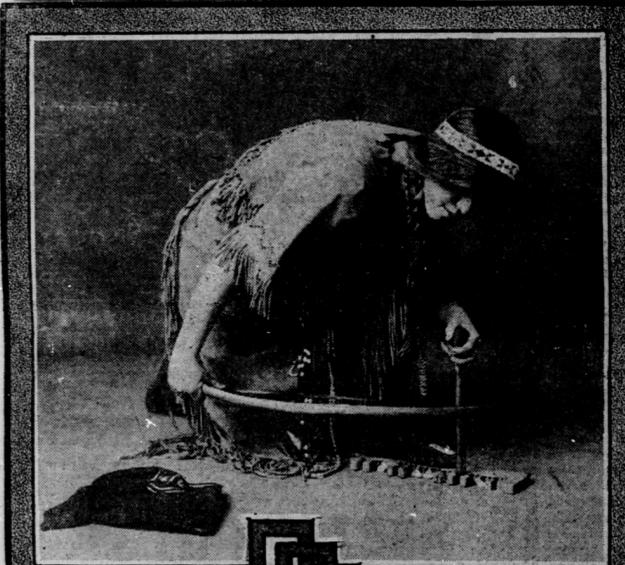


# The Camp Fire Sisters Helping Girls to Find Themselves



CAMP FIRE GIRLS IN CEREMONIAL COSTUME AT THEIR COUNCIL FIRE THE GUARDIAN OF FIRE IS AWAITING AN HONOR



A CAMP FIRE GIRL MAKING FIRE BY FRICTION



MAKING A BEADED HEADBAND THE COSTUME IS HER OWN DESIGN



THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS HANDLE A BIG CANOE LIKE INDIANS



ITS FUN HAVING SCOUTS HOLD COURSE

By Lucy Baker Jerome

W OHELO! What is it? An Indian, Persian or Hindu word? None of them. Just plain English—the watchword adopted by the newest and fastest growing organization in America. It is made from the first two letters of the words work, health and love, and this summer hundreds of voices are sending it ringing through forests, plains and valleys, over lakes, streams and rivers from Maine to California. What does it mean? That's a longer story. Let me tell you first that the new organization is not a Boy Scout movement. Boys have had everything done for them in the way of organization; the group spirit, the gang co-operation, the art of good team work has been theirs from the beginning. They know how to share their fortunes, their joys and mishaps, how to pull together to get the most out of the national motto. It is the girls for whom co-operation has done little. The eternal feminine shows itself still in the prerogative of individual selection—the "chum," the close friend with whom she shares her daily existence, exclusive of the rest of the world. So when this truth dawned upon the consciousness of Mrs. Luther Halsey Gulick, one of the most active sociological workers in America, whose husband is the head of the child study department of the Russell Sage Foundation, she thought the existing order of things should be changed. She formed a plan, and set herself to work. Result: The growing and lusty young organization known as the Camp Fire Girls.

among girls, the unanimous cry was: "Give us something interesting—something worth while to do." "But what?" she demanded of herself. "What can I give these girls which will take the place of the once universal home training and restore their interest in the simple and useful affairs of life?" She visited her friends' houses and asked for their daughters. Hardly any of the girls were at home; some were at school, others at college, some were taking finishing courses in distant boarding schools, others were attending domestic science classes. Everywhere Mrs. Gulick found empty homes, and mothers whose interests lay widely apart from their daughters. Finally a friend declared: "Elinor doesn't like to stay at home; she finds it dull. You see she is with other girls so much, that when she is all alone with me, she misses them and, of course, I understand that she is lonely. She likes to do household tasks still, though her interest is not so keen as it was. I know things are not going on right, but I don't see what I can do to help them." Like a flash Mrs. Gulick seized her inspiration. What was lacking in the life of the modern girl under such conditions? The answer came in a single word—romance. What was there in a round of the same duties, no matter how faithfully performed, to stimulate and act as incentive to the imagination and feed the visions of a girl? What could a girl think of when she sat apart from her comrades and dreamed her solitary dreams? Mrs. Gulick felt that she had found the key. So the Camp Fire girls sprang into being. Then two questions arose—how to teach them the necessity of the group spirit and how to supply the lacking element of romance. The first camp of 20 girls was divided into three grades, and a symbolical system of work and play instituted, with the camp fire as the center. Fire was chosen as the leading symbol, because it is the element of purification; the standing pine became the symbol of membership because it signifies simplicity and strength. A hand signifying "fire" was taken from the language of the North American Indians, and the study of the Indian ceremonies, tribal dress and customs—the Indian being taken as the ideal type of the outdoor man—was be-

gun. The girls were delighted. They entered enthusiastically into the plan of making their own dresses of buckskin and embroidering them with the Indian symbolical devices which they found most appropriate. Interest waxed high and the work was carefully done, for it is judged by the guardian—a woman who becomes the leader of every local group. If a girl does unusually well in this respect, her work becomes known to the chief guardian, who in the department of a series of camp fires within another organization, and in this way the additional honor is bestowed. The news of the movement spread rapidly, and in an incredibly short time camp fire groups were springing up everywhere. Today there is hardly a state in which some local group may not be found. The awarding of honors, which are generally beads of various colors, each color indicating a different award, tends to awaken the spirit of emulation. The one goes upward and the complete em-

division of the camp inmates into three grades also has its effect. A girl must be 12 years old, have at least 50 cents in her savings bank, and be able to pass certain simple tests before she can aspire to membership in the first grade, or the wood gatherers. When elected, she dons the wood gatherers' costume—a short duck skirt and middie blouse, with a sleeve decoration of two embroidered cross logs and the wood gatherers' ring. When promoted to the second grade, or the ranks of the wood gatherers, she adds to the wood gatherers' emblem a silver bracelet with an embroidered name. The highest rank is that of the torch bearer, and this grade has the right to wear the complete emblem of cross logs, flame and smoke, and a pin. The girls are very keen on obtaining these emblems, as the tests increase in difficulty as the grade increases. They sound so—so—noble!

When she rises to be a fire maker, for which she must have served as wood gatherer three months in a satisfactory manner, she must be able to meet the 14 definite requirements given in the camp fire book which include the preparing and serving of at least two meals, sleeping with open windows or out of doors for a month, and knowing the chief causes of infant mortality. She, in turn, learns and repeats her desire: "Seek beauty, Give service, Pursue knowledge, Be trustworthy, Hold on to health, Glorify work, Be happy..." When she becomes a torch bearer, whose honor it is to light the fire by the rubbing of sticks at the monthly councils, she repeats the torch bearer's desire: "That light which has been given to me, I desire to pass on to others." "Oh," exclaimed one girl thrilling with enthusiasm on being admitted to the honor ranks of the torch bearers. "I just love those words. They sound so—so—noble!"

Gathered one night as the sun set, Maiden chiefs of many nations Come long miles to be together, Ten long weeks by Lake Sebago, Lake Sebago, lake of all lakes, In the quiet of the twilight, Talked the chief of maidens to them, To the maidens gathered 'bout her; Spoke of what the camp would mean there. Of its name and of Wohelo, What that island of ours stands for, Of the purpose and the meaning, Three-fold meaning of Wohelo, For we all did come for, Of the health and love 'twill lead to; Of the work and love for others; Coming all for health gained staying At our camp at our Wohelo, Then the fire blazed up brighter, Spoke of what the camp would mean there. Filled with joy at their first fire, Kindled by the chief of maidens With her always ready helpers And the aim that they know how to strike, Then they softly gathered 'bout it, Sang their evening songs and parted, Melted in the outer darkness, Only looms to break the silence Calling in the far off marshes." Not a bad effort, Mrs. Gulick thinks for a girl who does not aspire to go farther as a poetess. "Just what is the aim of our organization?" the founder of the movement was asked. "I know that it helps girls to organize, and teaches them the group spirit, but after that—what?" Says Mrs. Gulick: "The aim of the movement is to apply the power of organization to the promotion of such activities for girls as will most effectively make for physical vitality, personal efficiency and spiritual and intellectual vigor, as well as to preserve the largest possible amount of beauty, romance and inspiration in their daily lives. The intense specialization and great rush of our modern life have made it increasingly difficult to preserve the beauty and romance which are essential to the health and happiness of our race. In this case it behooves us conspicuously to seek for our girls the experience and appreciation of the simple beauties and adventures that are within their reach." This is precisely what the Camp Fire girls are doing. They walk, they ride, they drive; they swim, paddle canoes down silver streams and across tranquil lakes; they row, dive and plunge in sparkling water; they cook, they sew, they embroider; become experts in Indian jewelry and bead symbolism, learn woodcraft, nature craft and camouflaging. They know how to strike camp, how to fold a rubber blanket, how to serve and how to command. Their weekly tests call for proficiency in athletics, domestic science, resourcefulness, poise of mind and skill in handicraft and art. The girl of tomorrow must inevitably meet greater demands in all these directions than those confronting the girl of today, for she must meet the demands of a community rather than merely those of her own home. Independence, in its restricted sense of the word, is fading out and interdependence is taking its place. The woman of the future will know economic independence, and the camp fire girls are preparing themselves to meet it by a new and special training. This training finds no place in the modern home, for the things that are absolutely necessary to bring about the change of conditions sure to appear in the life of the future, are missing from its curriculum. The education of the girl of yesterday was merely an accumulation of facts. The education of the girl of tomorrow will be an equipment for life, and this education is being offered to any group of girls who meet around the symbolical fire, whether it be the camp fire, the hearth blaze or merely the glimmer of a candle in the city or country home.