

THE STORY OF A PICNIC.

With spots of sunny openings, and with nooks,
To lie and read in, sloping into brooks.—*Leigh Hunt.*

One of Toronto's good hearted hostesses gave a picnic one day in June—up the Humber. She was not one of the sort who entertain only pleasant and agreeable people, or social favorites.

"I am going to try an experiment," she confided to a friend. "I shall ask a dozen of the most unpopular young people I know; the girls who never have a good time, or any attention—and the disagreeable men."

The friend felt sorry for her and said so, but she seemed confident.

"I know a way to entertain them. Books can do what I cannot."

With the help of six young ladies, thirteen lunch baskets were made ready; and instead of two or three heavy hampers, lugged by two or three rebellious men, each one had but a small share to look after. Thirteen is now known in certain quarters as a lucky number.

In every basket the clever hostess slipped a book which she judged would be the most acceptable to its temporary owner.

The Humber was reached early in the afternoon by car; and five boats were selected to convey the party up stream to the Old Mill—four skiffs and a canoe. The chaperone arranged them as nicely as anyone could an uncongenial company, reserving the most unmanageable man to paddle with her. He was a cynic, tired of life, morose and silent; but she was so pleasant and chatty that he simply had to talk. She began of books.

"Books," he sneered, "there hasn't been an interesting book written for a hundred years." She smiled, but didn't pursue that subject then.

The whole affair was a novelty. Instead of the usual table spread for the Company, the Thirteen were allowed to retain their baskets and partake of the contents individually when and wherever the fancy seized them. Well pleased, they scattered in many directions, though before sundown some twos had joined baskets.

When it was time to re-man the boats, the chaperone had a time hunting The Thirteen—just before dusk.

She found the Disagreeable Man stretched upon a kopje, perfectly lost in "THE REALIST," which, in a shamefaced way, he admitted *was* "startling."

A shy man had mustered sufficient courage to read that very funny book "THREE MEN ON WHEELS" to the prettiest girl.

A twentieth century young woman was devouring "THE GARDEN OF EDEN" all alone.

A man with hunting instinct in his veins read "THE BIOGRAPHY OF A GRIZZLY" from cover to cover to a timid, tender-hearted maiden—showing her the pictures on every page as he went along—and, when the chaperone came upon them, the feminine portion was in tears over the story of poor Wahb, and that cold-blooded man only sat and laughed at her.

A sentimental girl was found reading "SOPHIA" and glancing over the cover now and again at her very stoical companion in a soldier suit who was deep with Lieut. Winston Spencer Churchill in "LONDON TO LADYSMITH VIA PRETORIA."

The chaperone herself had given as much time as she could spare from her duties to "JANICE MEREDITH," the prettiest story she had read for years. She sat up late that night to finish it.

She had taken two copies of "FEO," by Max Pemberton, being sure that it would be liked; and the other books were "JOAN OF THE SWORD HAND," "A MASTER OF CRAFT," "RICHARD CARVEL," "LADY BARBARITY," and James Lane Allen's new book "THE REIGN OF LAW," a beautiful story of American life after the civil war. All the books were begged as loans until finished; and the hostess is planning another picnic, as the success of that day's outing is talked of yet among the Lucky Thirteen. It was quite a coincidence, and yet not a surprising one, that all the books were from THE COPP, CLARK PUBLISHING HOUSE.

PAGES OF PLEASURE, a catalogue of books for summer reading, may be had free of charge at all Book Stores, or will be mailed on application by THE COPP, CLARK CO., Limited, Publishers, Toronto.