

JANET:
A Stock-Farm Scout

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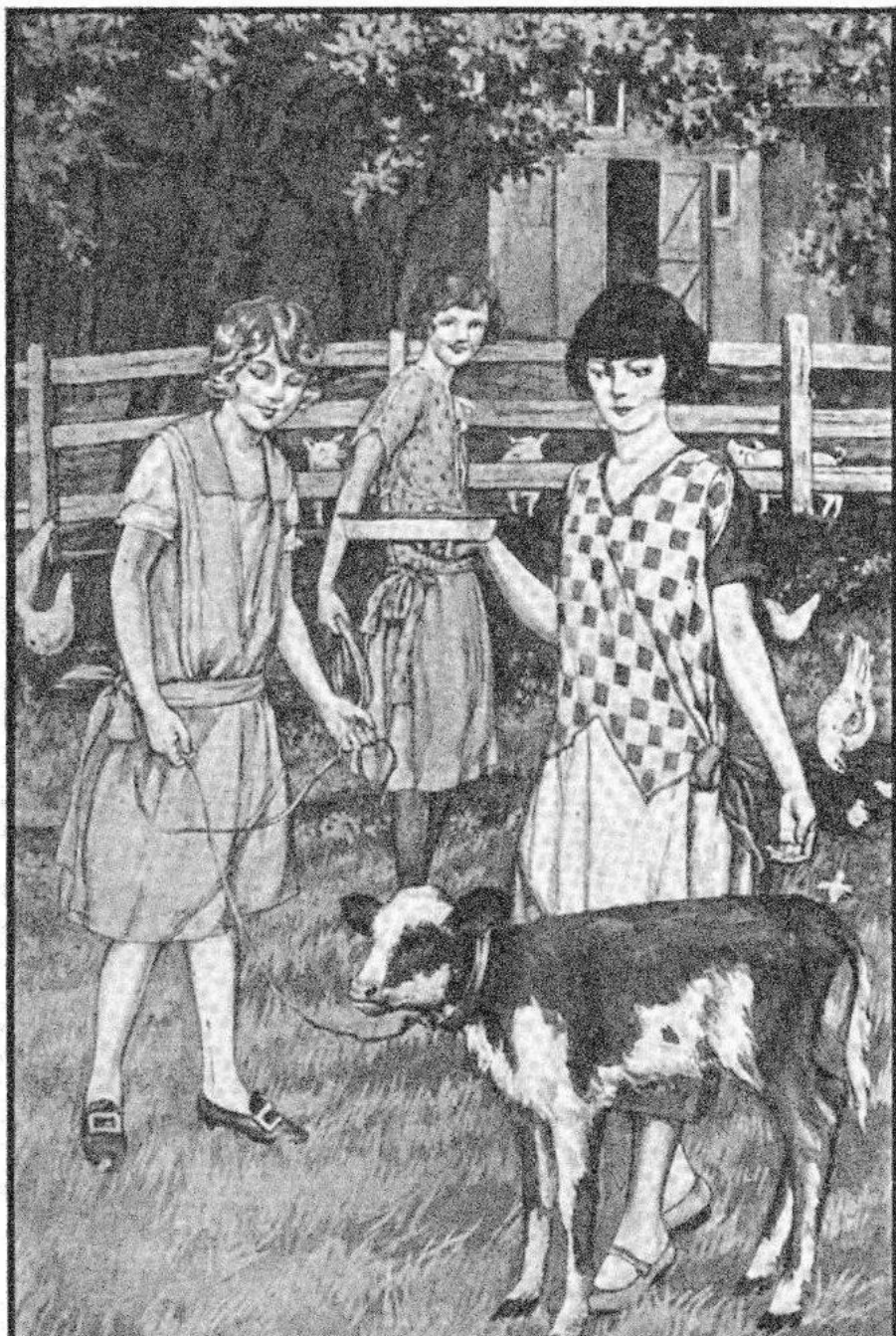
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Janet lifted the dish while Natalie and the other girls led Susy by the tether-rope to a shady spot.

JANET: A STOCK-FARM SCOUT

CHAPTER I

JANET'S ARRIVAL AT GREEN HILL

The local train from Grand Central station, bound for Four Corners, a flag station on the Harlem Division of the New York Central, carried a very busy young passenger one Saturday morning in June. The passenger was Janet Wardell and her work consisted of studying the first few written pages of a brand new diary. Although her eyes would often gaze with interest at the lovely country scenery to be seen from the car windows, Janet found an irresistible attraction in the writing before her.

Finally, however, Janet sighed and opened her suitcase to slip the diary into it, but read once more what she had inscribed.

“Last Night. Helene gave me this lovely diary last night and told me to be sure and jot down everything that might happen at Green Hill Farm this summer. It’s too bad Helene could not join us in our new Scout work, but Mother said we five girls would be quite enough trouble for poor Jimmy to chaperone; besides, Mother thinks Helene is too young to join a Scout Troop, but she will see about starting her with the Scout Brownies at once.

“Helene said, last night, that next to being one of our party on the farm, the story of all we do this summer, faithfully recorded by me in this book, will be best. So I solemnly agreed to keep tabs on the least thing we did—this is why I am writing now.

“Not only will Helene enjoy reading the diary after I go home, this fall, but we girls will have many a merry evening as we sit together reviewing our weeks on the farm. I just know there will be lots of excitement for us, and bushels of fun, every day.

“I suppose I really ought to begin the regular entries in the diary by dating them as I go along—but the dates ready-made are too limited to say all I will have to tell, so I’d better make my own. So now I’ll begin with to-day.

“Saturday. I had a dreadful time this morning trying to get away from the house in time to catch this train, because Frances Lowden, Belle Barlow and Norma Evaston talked and talked over the telephone until I had to tell them right out, that I would hang up if they didn’t say good bye. Belle laughed and said something I did not hear because I was handing the receiver to Mother to end the good byes for me.

“When we got to Grand Central station, what do you think? There were those girls waiting for me, laughing and rushing for me, and keeping me from getting my ticket. Thank goodness, the guard at the gate refused to pass them through to see me off, so they had to stand at one side and watch me go down the platform. I wasn’t any too soon for the train, either, for I had no sooner found a seat than the guard gave the signal and we started.

“I am looking at the country we are passing through and I think it is very pretty, indeed, but not as lovely as the country around Green Hill Farm.”

Janet dropped the diary inside the suitcase and was about to close the case when she remembered an item she wished to inscribe. The diary was removed again and the fountain-pen cap was unscrewed.

“I wish to say that I haven’t the slightest idea of doing a thing all summer but just sleep, and read, and lounge about in the hammock Mother is sending out to the farm. Natalie wrote me all about her vegetable venture, but she needn’t think I’m going to help. Not much! I’m too tired after the exams at school, and I’m going in for the rest cure!”

This time, Janet closed the suitcase upon the tempting diary and gave her entire attention to the views of the country. She had not much time to spend in this way before the guard on the train called out “Four Corners!”

Janet hurriedly gathered her baggage and left the car to find Natalie and Mrs. James eagerly awaiting her. While the two girls are engrossed with telling each other all that had happened since last they had seen each other, let us introduce Natalie to any reader who has not read about her in the first book of the Girl Scout Country Life Series.

Natalie Averill, a delicate city girl of about thirteen, had been orphaned a short time before the story opened. Mrs. James, lovingly nicknamed “Jimmy” by Natalie and her chums, acted as a friend and chaperone to the forlorn girl; and Rachel, who had been the cook in Mrs. Averill’s service for many years, remained to see Natalie through her experience of trouble. As Rachel declared to Mr. Marvin, the family lawyer: “Does you-all t’ink dis chile goin’ to go back on her Honey-babe now dat she

ain't got no money like-as-we-all figgered Mr. Averill done goin' to leab her? No, sah, not Rachel!"

Thus it happened that not only Natalie and Mrs. James, but Rachel, as well, went to Green Hill Farm to live and get ready for the coming of the four girl-boarders who were expected immediately after the closing of High School in the city. So that Saturday, when Amity Ketchum drove his old surrey up to the side porch of the farm house, Rachel bustled from the dining room door and held out her fat hands to Janet in hearty welcome. "Jus' in time, Honey, fer some of my famous tarts fer lunch! Come right on in!"

Saturday noon. Just finished luncheon with Nat and Jimmy. I never saw such a wonderful change in anyone as has taken place in Natalie since she came to Green Hill. Maybe it is due to her work in a garden, or it may be the country life and fine air, or it may be a number of good things combined, but whatever may be the cause, the effect is most astonishing. Natalie not only looks as happy and healthy as any one could wish, but also, she is changed from the morbid, pessimistic girl I knew in New York City to a joyous, optimistic worker. She says it is her garden that gave her an interest in living again.

Saturday, after luncheon. Natalie took me to see her vegetable garden. I didn't see much, but I dared not say so. There were a lot of wilty looking little green slips which Nat said were lettuce, radishes and other truck that Farmer Ames discarded and she had gathered in. Sort of an asylum for undesired plants, thought I. But Jimmy assured me that these same tired-looking sprigs of green would soon be delicious things to eat. I have to believe it because Mrs. James said it. I am writing this, now,

since Nat remained in the garden to root out several imaginary weeds, and I came back to the house with Jimmy.

Saturday, two P. M. Natalie came in a short time ago and immediately began dilating on a plan she had thought out for me, while she weeded the garden. She declared that I ought to start a stock farm and raise a few pigs and chickens. She explained that there would be plenty of table leavings as soon as the other girls arrive and the Scouts of Solomon Seal Camp might save their garbage for me, too. When I said that I never cared for garbage, Jimmy laughed and explained that Nat meant it for the pigs.

Then I replied that I never thought pigs lived on garbage; Natalie seemed amazed at my ignorance. But it soon developed that she had just learned it from Farmer Ames, who raises hogs for sale, every year. Jimmy (that's Mrs. James, you know) now said that Natalie's plan might be a good one, as there was not enough garden work to do to keep two of us busy, and Rachel needed lots of eggs. She suggested that I sell the eggs my chickens laid; thus making them pay for themselves. Sounds rather ungenerous of one, I think—coop the hens up, feed them with scraps, and then coax them to lay eggs that one might sell to pay for the cost of them. Jimmy also added that the Scouts might buy eggs from me.

Then Natalie proposed a walk to the barnyard to see if the chicken yards were fit to use. The fence is down and the coops need repairing, but that looks easy to do. We then looked for a likely place for a pig pen in case I decided to try the plan. Jimmy showed us the spot she would choose if she was going

to keep pigs. The more I think of the scheme, the more it appeals to me.

On our way back to the house, Natalie became enthusiastic on the subject and said that later on I might add a cow to my other pets and sell the milk to the Scouts at camp, and to Rachel for the house use.

That made me laugh! I jeered: "Can you see me trying to milk an obstreperous cow and being kicked over the fence into that ten-acre lot?"

While Nat and I laughed at this, Jimmy mentioned something about butter or butt her, but her words were rather ambiguous.

Saturday evening. At supper, this evening, Jimmy, Nat and I talked seriously of the idea of my starting a farm yard with enough stock to give me an interest in farm life and at the same time give both the Scout Camp and our house all the fresh eggs, milk and butter needed during the summer at prevailing prices. As Jimmy said: "There's a ready-made farm yard and barns for you with no rent to pay, and a field of free grass adjoining the barn yard, where your stock can roam and graze." Natalie then told me about the cute little pigs Farmer Ames's brother had for sale, and the many chickens Farmer Ames had for sale. It sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

Sunday. We visited Solomon's Seal Camp today, and had a very interesting time. Miss Mason's scouts certainly are clever in their woodcraft knowledge and work. I never knew before that you could make a fire with but two sticks. Nor did I dream that you could cook in vessels made of wildwood material alone.

One of the scouts told about the various mushrooms, good for food; and of wild potatoes; of a plant that produces greens exactly like spinach, and another plant that tastes like Brussels sprouts when boiled. It was extremely interesting, and I feel that this scout work is going to be more fun than labor.

After we got back to the house, Natalie and I planned to enlist several of the girls of Four Corners in a drive to start a second Patrol of Solomon's Seal Scouts. Miss Mason said, this afternoon, that she was eager to charter as a Troop with the organization headquarters, and that our founding another Patrol would help her out immediately. When Belle, Norma and Frances get her from the City, there will be five of us girls; with three or four more we can surely count on from Four Corners we shall have enough to start Patrol Number Two of Miss Mason's Troop.

Miss Mason is Captain of her Scouts, but she suggested this afternoon, that Jimmy ought to be the Lieutenant of the Troop. They have a splendid Leader of their Scouts, but they proposed me as Corporal of the Troop, when it is chartered by headquarters. I felt flattered by the selection, but replied that I thought Natalie was the logical one to choose. She declared that no one was as capable of taking things into their own hands as I—that is why the honor was presented to me. I think I'd like to be a Scout Corporal.

Sunday evening. We decided to stop Farmer Ames when he drives past, in the morning, and ask him to take us as far as Four Corners with him. We are going there to ask two girls to join a new Patrol at once; after that we're going to Mr. Ames's brother's farm and invite Dorothy Ames to enlist, too. Then we

will look at the pigs for sale, and on the way home we will stop in at Ames's farm and choose some chickens. You have doubtless discovered that I have decided to try out the stock-raising idea and see how I like it. If it doesn't succeed, I can always kill the chickens and sell them to Rachel for fricasee. Then I won't have lost out on my experiment or investment.

Monday morning, before breakfast. I was awakened from a sweet sleep by unearthly shouts from out-of-doors. It was Natalie in her garden, calling us to hurry out and see the new greens that had come up since Saturday. Of course we all hurried; Rachel who was in the kitchen preparing breakfast, ran first, Jimmy second and I was third, twisting up my hair as I ran. Rachel made a great fuss over the marvel of her "Honey-Chile" raising vegetables. And I admitted that it was a marvel that anything Natalie ever planted was given time to come up. Natalie frowned, and Rachel pooh-poohed but Jimmy laughed. She told me later that Natalie really did dig up the seeds several times, to see how far they had sprouted.

Monday, after breakfast. I am up in my room for my hat so I can steal a moment to say that we are off for Four Corners to visit the girls Natalie knows, to join our Patrol-to-be. Farmer Ames is coming down the road, so no more at present, little diary.

Monday A. M. at Four Corners. I'm scribbling a line in my diary while Nat is writing postals to the girls at home, urging them to come to Green Hill at once, as we need them in the Patrol. The new members we met at the Corners are crazy to join us, so that is settled. Natalie said she would write while at the store so the cards could go out on the next mail. Farmer Ames will be back for us in a few minutes to take us to his brother's farm to

see the pigs. On our way back from his brother's home he is going to stop at his own place and let us choose the chickens.

Monday, one P. M. Well, I've gone and done the most reckless thing! I spent most of my monthly allowance for three weeny pigs, an adult hen that wants to set, and several big chickens, and a lot of baby chicks. It happened this way: The piglets were so wee and darling that I just had to have them so I bought all that Mr. Ames had for sale.

When we drove in at our Farmer Ames's place, he said that Nat and I could select any chickens we liked for a dollar each. The rooster would be half a dollar more. We went to the yard and looked over all the chickens there, but a variegated cock that strutted around like an emperor in his palace gardens caught my eye. I drew Natalie's attention to him, and we decided to buy him. He has a marvelous tail of long coque feathers, and a pair of red bibs hanging from his beak. I suppose they are called bibs, because that seems to be the only use they can be put to.

After deciding upon that rooster, we began looking for the largest and fattest hens we could find. This was Natalie's suggestion. She is becoming a splendid business woman since coming to the farm to live. She whispered to me so Farmer Ames need not overhear her: "He said we could choose any chicken we wanted as they are all the same price. So let's take those great big ones for they must weigh at least a pound more than the smaller brown ones."

Farmer Ames tried to dissuade us from taking the gorgeous chanticler, and the big Plymouth Rock hens—that is what he

called them—but we knew it was because he hated to lose the beautiful cock and those fine big hens. So we insisted upon having the ones we chose, or none.

Ames begged us to take Rhode Island Reds and a few speckled guinea-hens because he said they were better laying hens. But we could see that his worry and concern was because we chose the most picturesque of all his fowl. Natalie is shrewd, so she said, as Ames went in to catch the little chicks for us: “Doesn’t it stand to reason that those small brown hens will lay small eggs? Our lovely big hens will lay great big fat eggs!” I hadn’t given that a thought until Nat spoke of it, but it sounds plausible.

Mr. Ames took the setting hen we wanted, and put her in a feed-bag so we could take her home, but he said he could not catch the other chickens until night when they went to roost. He promised to bring them over in the morning. Then we started home. On the way, he said: “Remember! I warned you not to choose that fancy rooster and them ancient hens, but you would have it your own way. So now I wash my hands of the consequences. Don’t blame me if they don’t lay golden eggs for you!”

Natalie and I laughed, for we felt sorry for poor Ames; that cock was the only handsome bird he had, and now he is ours. The piglets, safe in a crate in the back of the wagon, squealed too cunningly for anything when we bumped over a rut in the road. As soon as we arrived at the house, Farmer Ames left the crate on the back stoop, and Nat helped me carry the bag with the hen in it to the barn where a chicken coop was waiting for her. On the way out of the yard, Mr. Ames called to Jimmy and said:

“Them cherries oughta be picked today or tomorrow, sure. They’ll rot if you don’t gather them.”

Rachel hurried out to the stoop at that, and suggested that the girl scouts pick the fruit on shares. That sounded great, so Natalie and I offered to run down and ask the scouts if they wanted to help pick the cherries. Of course they did!

Monday, 6 P. M. Just finished picking cherries. Rachel is preparing supper for all of us; the scouts did such good work that Jimmy said they must have a meal included with their wages. Their pay was half of all the cherries they picked. My, there were a lot! And we ate so many, besides, that it is doubtful if we can eat a bit of supper.

A dreadful thing happened to Natalie while we were up in the cherry trees. A hornet stung her on the neck and she let go of the bough. Down she came, but a friendly limb caught her and held her until we rescued her. When Rachel heard her scream, she ran out to see what had happened. It only took her a second to rush across the grass and catch hold of a high step-ladder that stood under a neighboring tree. But Rachel did not see the girl standing on top of the ladder, so it was whirled away from under her, and she was left hanging high and dry. Rachel stood the ladder under Natalie’s bough and then began to hastily ascend it. But the ladder was not securely placed and when it began to sway, Rachel got dizzy. Down came her two hundred pounds right in a bushel of ripe ox-hearts. I could have wept at the wholesale loss of such fruit! Rachel said she might be able to reclaim the cherries by canning them.

Monday night, 8 P. M. My troubles have begun. I forgot about those pigs in the crate while the scouts were here to supper. As we all went out on the side porch to say good night to the girls of Solomon's Seal Camp, the porkers began squealing dreadfully. The scouts said I was cruel to forget to give them their supper, so I got Rachel to help me fix up a dish of corn meal and milk for them. This done, I remembered the setting hen in the barn. I had not fed her, either.

When I told Natalie, she laughed and said my investment would be a dead loss if I kept up that kind of treatment. So we both decided to go to the barn, as it is too spooky a place for one to wander in alone. Not that the hen would jump at us, and there is no other animal there, yet, but two is company, you know.

It was Natalie's suggestion that we take the eggs with us and place them in the nest under the hen, while she ate her meal. We took the leavings from supper, and all the bad cherries that Rachel had thrown in the garbage pail, and filled a pan with them. We took twelve eggs from the pasteboard box in the pantry, although Mr. Ames said for us to place fifteen eggs under the hen at a time. Rachel only had thirteen left in the box that came from the store, and we thought we had best leave one in case she needed it for breakfast in the morning. Nat carried the pan of food and the flashlight, while I carefully carried the twelve eggs.

Oh, such a time as we had with that old scrapper of a hen! She fought us with bill and claws, and our hands and wrists are a sight! Finally Natalie almost squeezed the life out of her in trying to hold her out of the nest, and I managed to get seven of

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