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**The Outdoor Girls in Army  
Service Or, doing their bit for the  
soldier boys**

Laura Lee Hope

# Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Laura Lee Hope

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8491-7080-6

[www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com)

[www.tredition.de](http://www.tredition.de)

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**THE OUTDOOR GIRLS IN ARMY SERVICE**

**OR**

**DOING THEIR BIT FOR THE SOLDIER BOYS**

**BY**

**LAURA LEE HOPE**



# THE OUTDOOR GIRLS IN ARMY SERVICE

## CONTENTS

I "I'VE VOLUNTEERED!"

II GRIM SHADOWS OF WAR

III NEWS FROM THE FRONT

IV THE POWDER MILL

V A SHOT IN THE DARK

VI MOONLIGHT AND MYSTERY

VII ROBBED

VIII THE BIG GAME

IX GAY CONSPIRATORS

X MAGIC LANTERNS

XI A SLACKER?

XII HONOR FLAGS

XIII "SMILE, GIRLS, SMILE"

XIV THE SPY AGAIN

XV MORE SURPRISES

XVI THE HOSTESS HOUSE

XVII HELPING UNCLE SAM

XVIII THE EVENING GUN

XIX FLAMES

XX THE RESCUE

XXI ALLEN A HERO

XXII MAKING GOOD

XXIII JUST FRIENDS

XXIV CAPTIVE AND CAPTORS

XXV THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED

## CHAPTER I

"I'VE VOLUNTEERED!"

"Well, who is going to read the paper?"

Amy Blackford stopped knitting for a moment, the half-finished sweater suspended inquiringly in the air, while she asked her question and gazed about impatiently at her busy group of friends.

"It's your turn, anyhow, Mollie," she added, fingers flying and head bent as she resumed her work. "You haven't read to us for five days."

"Oh, don't bother me," snapped the one addressed as Mollie. She was black-haired and black-eyed, was Mollie Billette, with a little touch of French blood in her veins that accounted for her restless vivacity and sometimes peppery temper. "You've made me drop a stitch, Amy Blackford, and if anybody else speaks to me for the next five minutes, I'll eat 'em."

"Well, as long as you don't eat any more of my chocolates, I don't care," remarked Grace Ford, lazily helping herself to one of the threatened candies. "I had a full box this morning, and now look at them."

"Haven't time to look at anything," returned Mollie crossly, fishing in vain for the lost stitch. "If the poor soldiers depended upon the sweaters you made, Grace, I'd feel sorry for them, I would indeed!"

"Oh, dear, girls, now what's the matter?"

Framed in the doorway of the cottage stood Betty Nelson, their adored "Little Captain," fresh and sweet as the morning itself, smiling around at them inquiringly.

"What is the matter?" she repeated as they moved up to make room for her on the veranda steps. "I'm more afraid than ever to

leave you alone these days when every dropped stitch means a quarrel. Give it to me, Mollie, I'll pick it up for you."

With a sigh, Mollie relinquished the tiresome sweater and Betty went to work at it with a skill born of long practice.

"There you are," she announced triumphantly, after an interval during which the girls had watched with eager eyes and bated breath. "That was a mean one. Thought it was going to make me rip out the whole row—but I showed it! Now, please, don't anybody drop any more. I must finish that pair of socks to-day."

"Oh, dear," sighed Amy resignedly. "Then our last hope is gone."

"Goodness, that sounds doleful," chuckled Betty, stretching her arms above her head and reveling in the brilliant sunshine. "What particular thing seems to be the matter now, Amy? Has Will been misbehaving?"

Amy flushed vividly and bent closer over her work.

"How could he be when he's been in town for over a week?" she retorted with unusual spirit. "It's just that nobody will read the paper, and I'm just dying to hear the news. I want to keep up with the times."

"Well, if that's all," said the Little Captain, sitting up with alacrity, "I'm always willing to oblige. Mollie, you're sitting on it!"

"Knit one, purl two," chanted Mollie. "Wait till I get this needle off and I'll give it to you. I can't stop now!"

"All right, then I'm going to get my knitting."

Betty made as though to rise but Amy held her down and turned despairingly to Mollie.

"Mollie," she pleaded, "be reasonable. You know very well that if Betty ever gets started with her knitting then nobody'll read the news."

"Knit one, purl two, knit one, purl two," sang Mollie imperturbably. "There, now, isn't that beautiful?"

She sprang from the seat and whirled around upon them, holding up the almost-finished sweater for their inspection.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she repeated enthusiastically.

"Of course," said Grace, dryly, while Betty deftly grabbed the paper. "It's the most beautiful and most curious thing I ever laid eyes on. It isn't as though," she added, with biting sarcasm, "I had seen hundreds just like it within the last month or two—"

"Oh, you can't make me mad," said Mollie, settling down with energy to the final finishing. "You're just jealous, that's all, and the more you turn up your nose, the more you show your real feelings."

"Oh, is that so?" retorted Grace, reaching out for the candy box for the twentieth time that morning. "Well, as my kind of nose has never, under any circumstances whatsoever, been known to turn up—"

"Oh, do stop chattering," Mollie interrupted heartlessly. "Who cares what kind of noses we've got? Go ahead, Betty, you'd better get started before Grace gets to quarreling on the subject of eyelashes or something."

"I never quarreled with my eyelashes," said Grace haughtily. "I leave that to other people."

"My, isn't she conceited!" chuckled Betty. "Now I'm going to read," she added, letting her eyes rest upon the glaring headlines of the first page. "If you want to listen, all right; and if you want to talk about sweaters and eyelashes—"

"Oh, Betty, do go on," sighed Amy. "We've been waiting so long."

"All right," said Betty obligingly; then, as the full sense of what she read was borne in upon her, her face clouded and she bit her lip and shook her head.

"Girls," she began, and something in her tone made them drop their knitting for a moment and gather anxiously about her. "Those, those—Germans—"

"Huns, you mean," interrupted Mollie fiercely, as she read over the Little Captain's shoulder.

"Have sunk another of our ships," said Betty, her lips set in a straight line. "And—and they think the loss will be heavy. Oh, girls, I can't read it—it's too horrible!"

She flung down the paper, but Mollie snatched it almost before it reached the step. Then with eyebrows drawn together, and twin spots of red flaming in either cheek, she read the account of the disaster from beginning to end.

"There," she said at last, flinging down the paper and glaring about her as though the girls themselves were at fault. "Now you see what we're knitting sweaters for, and—and—everything! Oh, if I could just put on a uniform, and take up a gun and—and—go after those—those awful Huns!"

"Goodness, if you looked like that," commented Grace, "you wouldn't have to fire a shot. They'd all drop dead just from fright."

"So much the better," said Mollie, beginning to knit again ferociously. "It would be a shame to waste good ammunition on them."

"I wonder," said Betty thoughtfully, her eyes on the far-off horizon, "what the boys are going to do. They've seemed so mysterious lately, and the minute you begin to question them about enlisting, they change the subject."

"Yes, and it's made me desperate," cried Mollie, the tempestuous, flinging down the unfortunate sweater once more. "I know what I'd do if I were a man, and Betty and all the rest of us girls! But either they didn't know or they wouldn't tell. Do you suppose—"

"They've decided to wait for the draft?" finished Grace, settling her cushions more comfortably. "That's a funny thing to say, Mollie—about our boys."

"I know," said Mollie, knitting more furiously than ever. "But just the same, I can't understand why they have been so terribly secretive about it."

"I guess we needn't worry about that," said Betty, although there was a little worried line between her brows that belied her words. "Allen wouldn't—" here she stammered, stopped and flushed, while the girls turned laughing eyes upon her.

"Of course," she added hastily, "I mean that none of the boys would hesitate, when it's a question of serving his country."

"That's all right, but you said Allen," teased Mollie, unconvinced.  
"And oh, Betty, how you blushed!"

"Nonsense!" returned Betty, blushing more than ever. "It's just sunburn, that's all. Now do you want me to read the rest of the news, or don't you? Because I have to finish those socks—"

"Yes, yes, go on," cried Amy. "We won't say another word, Betty." Which was funny, coming from quiet Amy, who usually spoke one word to the other girls' ten.

So Betty read the news from one end of the paper to the other, until even those insatiable young people were content, then ran into the cottage to get her knitting.

"Now," she said, returning and seating herself with businesslike alertness on the very edge of the step, "you'll see some real speed."

"Oh, Betty, have you come to the heel?" cried Mollie, running over to the Little Captain, and regarding the flying needles with a sort of awe. "Please show me how. They say the Red Cross needs socks for the boys more than they need anything else. And I know I'll never learn to do them."

"Oh, it's easy," returned Betty, obligingly slowing down for their benefit, while they gathered about her, eager and bright-eyed, for the lesson.

They formed a pretty picture, this group of outdoor girls, with the morning sunlight falling upon graceful figures and bent heads, ardent little patriots, every one of them, whole-heartedly eager to give their all for the service of their country.

They were still engrossed in watching Betty's nimble fingers, when the shrill and familiar whistle of the little ferryboat caught their attention.

"Oh, I didn't know it was time," Amy was beginning, when Mollie interrupted her.

"It's stopping here," she cried. "And somebody's getting off."

"It's the boys!" cried Betty, springing to her feet, the bright color again flooding her face. "They never told us they'd be back to-day. There's Allen. Oh, tell me, what is it he is shouting?"

The little ferryboat had steamed away, and four figures were racing toward them.

"Betty," yelled the foremost of these. "I've volunteered—I've volunteered!"

## CHAPTER II

### GRIM SHADOWS OF WAR

"What is that he is yelling?" questioned Mollie.

"He said something about volunteering," returned Betty.

"Volunteering!" came from Mollie, Grace and Amy simultaneously, and in the excitement of the moment, their knitting was completely forgotten.

And now while the girls are waiting for the boys to come up, let me take just a moment to tell my new readers something concerning these girls and the other volumes in this series of books.

The leader of the quartette was Betty Nelson, often called the "Little Captain." Betty was a bright, active girl, who always loved to do things.

Grace Ford was tall and slender, and a charming conception of young womanhood. She had a brother, Will, who at times was rather hasty, and occasionally this would get him into trouble, much to the annoyance of his sister. Grace herself had one failing, if such it could be called. She was exceedingly fond of chocolates, and was never without some of this confection in her possession.

Some years before there had been a mystery concerning Amy Blackford. She had then been known by the name of Stonington, but the mystery had been unraveled by the finding of her long lost brother, Henry Blackford. Amy was of a quiet disposition, and more timid than any of the others.

The quartette was completed by Mollie Billette, often called "Billy." Mollie was the daughter of a well-to-do widow of French ancestry, and the girl was a bit French herself in her general make-up.

In our first volume, entitled "The Outdoor Girls of Deepdale," the particulars were given of the organization of a camping and tramp

club by the girls, and of how they went on a tour, which brought them many adventures.

After this first tour the Outdoor Girls went to Rainbow Lake, and then took another tour, this time in a motor car. After that, they had some glorious days on skates and iceboats while at a winter camp, and then journeyed to Florida, where they took a trip into the wilds of the interior, and participated in many unusual happenings.

Returning from the land of orange groves, the girls next took a trip to Ocean View. Here they had a glorious time bathing, and otherwise enjoying themselves, and also solved the mystery surrounding a box that was found in the sand.

During those strenuous days the girls had made many friends, including Allen Washburn, who was now a young lawyer of Deepdale. Allen had become a particular friend of Betty's, and this friendship seemed to be thoroughly reciprocal.

Will Ford's particular high-school chum had been Frank Haley, and as a consequence, Frank had been drawn into the circle, along with Roy Anderson, another young man of the town.

These young fellows often went off camping, and usually in the vicinity of where the girls had planned to spend their outing days.

Deepdale was a picturesque city of about fifteen thousand people, located on the Argono river, which, some miles below, emptied into Rainbow Lake. Back of Deepdale was a rich farming country, which tended to make the town a prosperous one.

Returning from Ocean View, the girls started on a new outing, as related in the volume before this, entitled "The Outdoor Girls on Pine Island." The girls occupied a bungalow, which had been turned over for their use by an aunt of Mollie Billette. The boys were in a camp near by.

Quite by accident both girls and boys had stumbled upon a gypsy cave, cleverly hidden in the underbrush, and had afterward succeeded in rounding up the entire gypsy band, incidentally regaining some property which had been stolen from the girls.

Now, at the time our story opens, the Outdoor Girls were again at Pine Island, in the cottage lent them by "Aunt Elvira"; but times had

changed, and they were no longer solely upon pleasure bent. The grumbling, menacing unrest of war seemed in the very air they breathed, and from dawn to evening they thought of very little else.

Now at the ringing shout, "I've volunteered," they were on their feet, fairly trembling with excitement and eagerness.

"Allen, Allen!" cried Betty, the color flaming into her face. "Oh, I'm so glad! I'm so glad!"

"Gee, he's not the only one," cried a big, strapping lad, Frank Haley, by name, throwing himself upon the steps, and looking up at the girls triumphantly. "Just because he can run faster than we can, he gets all the credit."

"You, too, Frank?" cried Betty, turning upon him with shining eyes.

"And here comes Roy," put in Mollie. "Did he —"

"You just bet he did," Roy Anderson, red and perspiring, answered for himself. "Did you ever hear of an Irishman staying out of a fight? I'm aching already to get my hands on Fritz."

"What's the matter with Will?" asked Grace a little anxiously, for the young fellow coming slowly toward them with downcast eyes and bent head was her brother. "He looks as if he'd lost his last friend."

Seven pairs of eyes were immediately focused upon the apparently despondent figure, while the boys shifted uneasily and looked vaguely troubled.

"Hello, folks," Will saluted them, as he sank down upon the lower step, and looked out toward the water. "Why the sudden hush?"

For a moment no one spoke. They were all strangely embarrassed by this unusual attitude of Will's. He had always been so frank and outspoken. And now —

"Oh, for Pete's sake, say something!" he burst forth at last, looking up at the silent group defiantly. "You were making enough noise before, but the minute I come along, you just stop short and stare. I didn't know I was so fascinating."

"You're not," said Mollie promptly.

With an impatient grunt, Will stuffed his hands into his pockets and stalked off into the woods.

"Well," said Grace, with a long sigh, "I never saw Will act that way before. Now what's the matter?"

"Indigestion, probably," said Allen, trying to pass it off. "He acts just the way I feel when I have it. Which reminds me that I'm getting mighty all-fired hungry."

"Well, you don't get anything to eat," said Betty decidedly, "until you tell us all about everything, since the day you left here so mysteriously to the present time."

"Seems we've got to sing for our supper – or rather, breakfast," said Frank with a grin. "Go ahead, Allen, but be brief. I want some of Betty's biscuits."

"Goodness, do you suppose Betty's going to start in and cook biscuits, now?" cried Mollie. "Why, we just got through our own breakfast."

"Well, we didn't," said Roy, nibbling a piece of grass for want of something better. "And you ought to take it as a proof of our devotion, that we didn't stop for any. We were too anxious to get here to tell you our news."

"And blow a little," scoffed Mollie, the irrepressible.

"Oh, for goodness' sake stop talking," entreated Betty, with her hands to her ears. "If the boys want biscuits they shall have them – if I have to stay up all night to cook some for them. They can have anything in the house, as far as I'm concerned."

"Hear, hear!" cried the boys in chorus, looking up admiringly at her flushed face.

"If volunteering has that effect," Roy added, "I'm going back and do it all over again."

"You said it," agreed Frank. "Gee, but I'm hungry!"

"Did you say we could have anything we wanted?" Allen was demanding of the Little Captain in an undertone. "No exceptions?"

"None," said Betty, dimpling.

"Then," said Allen deliberately, his eyes fixed steadily upon her sparkling face. "If you please — I'll take — you!"

"Oh," gasped Betty, her eyes falling before the young lawyer's ardent gaze, while the rich color flooded her face. "I said anything — not anybody. Allen, please don't be foolish. They're all looking at us."

"Well, you can't blame 'em," Allen retorted whimsically. "They're not used to seeing two such good-looking people together," he added in bland explanation.

"My, don't we hate ourselves!" said Betty, dimpling again. "But go ahead and tell us your adventures," she added, glad to change a subject which was becoming too personal. "No story — no supper, you know."

"We don't want supper — we want breakfast," interrupted Frank, with a grin. "What have you been saying to her, Allen — to get her dates mixed like that?"

"Allen Washburn, are you going to tell that story or are you not?" queried Mollie, in a menacingly quiet tone of voice. "If you're not —"

"Yes, ma'am," said Allen meekly. "Where shall I begin, please?"

"At the beginning," said Grace sarcastically, and reached for her candy box, grimacing to find it empty.

"Thank you," said Allen courteously. "Well, as you know, we four husky braves meandered from the island one bright morning in the early part of the week to seek our fortune, as it were, in the city of promise."

"Yes, that's all it does do," Roy put in pessimistically. "Promise!"

"As I was saying," Allen continued, settling himself in a more comfortable position on the steps, and ignoring the interruption. "We sauntered off, and straightway looked up a recruiting station."

"Oh!" gasped Amy, hands clasped and eyes shining. "That must have been exciting."

"Well, I don't know," said Allen, scratching his head reflectively, "that that part was so exciting, but wait till you hear what happened afterward. After we found where the recruiting office was, we went to the hotel we were stopping at, and punished a mighty big breakfast. You see, we figured out that we were going to put our necks into the noose, as it were, and we wanted something good and big to stand up on."

"Wouldn't your feet do?" asked Betty innocently.

"Heavens, no!" replied Allen, answering the query in solemn earnest, while the girls giggled, and the boys grinned appreciatively. "We were so nervous by that time we weren't sure we had any feet."

"All you had to do was to look," murmured Mollie maliciously. "You couldn't miss 'em."

Allen looked hurt, got up and sat on his feet.

"If you don't see them, perhaps you'll forget about them," he offered by way of explanation. "You don't know how sensitive I am on the subject of feet."

"I couldn't blame you," Mollie was beginning, when Betty broke in with a little despairing cry for help.

"If we don't stop them," she said, looking appealingly about her, "we won't get any farther than breakfast. Allen, what did you do next?"

"Next?" queried Allen, stretching his long legs and squinting up at the sun. "Let me see. Oh yes! Having put down a breakfast that must have added four pounds to our weight, we sauntered forth once more to meet our doom. By that time we were so nervous, we almost mistook a café on the corner for the recruiting station—"

"Hey, speak for yourself, won't you?" queried Roy, adding, as he turned to the girls with a grin, "We had to show Allen a performing monkey on the street, and get his mind off, before we succeeded in engineering him to the right place."