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Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
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Katharina II. von Rußland Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
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**The Automobile Girls in the  
Berkshires The Ghost of Lost  
Man's Trail**

Laura Dent Crane

# Imprint

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The Splash Descended on Unsuspecting Bab. *Frontispiece.*



# CONTENTS

- I. THE REUNION
- II. NEW LIGHT ON OLD PAPERS
- III. HAPPINESS, AND ANOTHER SCHEME
- IV. IN THE HEART OF THE BERKSHIRES
- V. A DAY IN THE WOODS
- VI. "THE GREAT WHITE ALSO"
- VII. MOLLIE FOLLOWS THE TRAIL
- VIII. END OF THE SEARCH
- IX. SPIRIT OF THE FOREST
- X. A KNOCK AT THE DOOR
- XI. THE COON HUNT
- XII. THE WOUNDED BIRD
- XIII. THE WIGWAM
- XIV. GIVE WAY TO MISS SALLIE!
- XV. SOCIETY IN LENOX
- XVI. AT THE AMBASSADOR'S

- XVII. A VISIT TO EUNICE
- XVIII. PLANS FOR THE SOCIETY CIRCUS
- XIX. THE OLD GRAY GOOSE
- XX. BARBARA AND BEAUTY
- XXI. EUNICE AND MR. WINTHROP LATHAM
- XXII. THE AUTOMOBILE WINS
- XXIII. THE RECOGNITION
- XXIV. WHAT TO DO WITH EUNICE

7





# The Automobile Girls in the Berkshires



# CHAPTER I

## THE REUNION

"Mollie Thurston, we are lost!" cried Barbara dramatically.

The two sisters were in the depth of a New Jersey woods one afternoon in early September.

"Well, what if we are!" laughed Mollie, leaning over to add a cluster of wild asters to her great bunch of golden rod. "We have two hours ahead of us. Surely such clever woodsmen as we are can find our way out of woods which are but a few miles from home. Suppose we should explore a real forest some day. Wouldn't it be too heavenly! Come on, lazy Barbara! We shall reach a clearing in a few moments."

"You lack sympathy, Miss Mollie Thurston; that's your trouble."

Barbara was laughing, yet she anxiously scanned the marshy ground as she picked her way along.

"I wouldn't mind being lost in these woods a bit more than you do, if I were not so horribly afraid of snakes. Oh, my! this place looks full of 'em."

"They are not poisonous, Bab, or I might be more sympathetic," said Mollie reassuringly. "The snakes in these woods are harmless. How can a girl as brave as you are be such a goose about a poor, wriggly little 'sarpint,' that couldn't harm you if it tried."

"O-o-o!" shivered Bab. "One's own pet fear has nothing to do with sense or nonsense. Kindly remember your own feelings toward the timid mouse! Just the same, I should like to play 'Maid Marian' for a while and dwell in the heart of a woodland glen. If ever I have a chance to go on a camping trip, I shall get rid of my fear of snakes, somehow."

"Bab," said Mollie, after a moment's pause, "hasn't it been dreadfully dull since Ruth and her father went away? Do you think they will ever come back? I can hardly believe it has been only three weeks since they left Kingsbridge, and only six weeks since we

came back from Newport. Anyhow I am glad Grace Carter is home again from her visit to her brother."

"Cheer up, Mollie, do!" encouraged Bab. 9 "Ruth has promised to pay us a visit before she goes home to Chicago, and she is a girl of her word, as you and I well know. I am expecting a letter from her every day."

"Well," Mollie ejaculated in heart-felt tones, "I know I am nearly dead to see her. Grace and I were talking of it only yesterday."

"Mollie, I don't want to be a croaker," began Bab, after a little hesitation, "but have you noticed that mother seems worried about something? When I was talking yesterday about how crazy I was to go to Vassar some day, mother looked as though she wanted to cry. I stopped there and then. She has seemed so gay and cheerful until recently. I wonder whether she is worried about money."

Mollie nodded her head and frowned. "Now you speak of it, Bab, I believe I have noticed that she seems depressed at times. I think she is tired out and needs a complete change. She had a long letter from Cousin Betty in St. Paul yesterday, asking her to make a visit. I think mother should accept. You and I are certainly big enough to look after ourselves until school commences. Let's beg her to go."

"All right, Mollie, we will," said her older sister, "but if the family funds are even lower than usual, where is the money to come from for such an expensive trip? Just the same, I shall question mother, and find out what's the matter."

Bab was walking on bravely, trying to forget her horror of snakes.

"I am sure," she thought, "that I can feel my feet trembling inside my boots; I am so afraid of stepping on one of the wretched little pests."

It had rained the day before, and the ground under the thick tangle of trees and underbrush being unusually marshy, the girls had to pick their way carefully. Mollie walked ahead while they were talking. Barbara jumping from the twisted root of one tree to another half a yard away, felt something writhe and wriggle under her foot. Without stopping to look down, she shrieked—"A snake! a snake!"—and ran blindly forward. Before Mollie had time to look

around, Barbara caught her foot under a root and tumbled headlong into the wet mud.

"Bab," cried Mollie, "you certainly have gone and done it this time! How wet and muddy you are!"

She picked up a stick and raked in the leaves near her sister.

"See, here's what you have made such a fuss about, a tiny garter snake, that couldn't hurt a thing. You've crushed the thing with your heel." 11

Mollie turned suddenly. "Barbara, what is the matter with you?" she asked, as she caught a glimpse of her sister's face. "Why don't you get up? Can I help you?" She leaned over her sister.

Poor Bab's face was white as a sheet, and she was trembling.

"Yes, do help me if you can," she answered. "I can't get up by myself. I'm afraid I have turned my ankle. Here, take my hand. Sitting here in this mud I feel as if I had fallen into a nest of snakes."

Mollie gave Bab both her hands. Setting her teeth, Bab tried to rise, but, with a groan, sat down again. The second time Mollie pulled with all her might. Barbara, summoning her courage, rose slowly to her feet. Without speaking she leaned against the trunk of the nearest tree.

"Wait here, dear," urged Mollie, more worried than she would show. "I will try and find you a stick. Then if you lean on me and use the stick in the other hand, perhaps we can get along all right."

They were several miles from home and in another hour the dusk would be upon them. So the two girls struggled bravely on through the thick woods, though it was difficult to walk abreast in the narrow path. Barbara insisted she was better with each step, but Mollie knew otherwise. With every foot of ground they covered Bab limped more and more painfully. Now and then when her injured foot pressed too heavily on the rough ground, she caught her breath and swallowed a groan. Mollie realized they would not get home before midnight at the rate they were now moving.

"Rest here, Bab," she insisted, when they came to an opening in the woods where the shade was less dense. "I think I see a place

over there that must lead into a road. I will run on ahead and find some one to come back to help you."

Bab was glad to sit down. Her foot was swelling and growing more painful every moment; her pulses were throbbing. She was almost crying, but she would never mention surrender; she was not sorry, however, when Mollie suggested that she should rest.

Mollie sped through the woods as fast as she could run. As soon as her back was turned, Bab closed her eyes. "How glad I am to rest," she thought gratefully.

In the half hour that Barbara Thurston waited alone her mind wandered to many of her own hopes and fears. First, she couldn't help worrying over her mother. Then, she thought of her own ambition. More than anything in the world she longed to go to Vassar College. In two years more she would be ready to enter, but where was the money to come from? Barbara realized that her mother would never be able to pay her expenses from their small income; nevertheless, she meant to go. The Kingsbridge High School offered a scholarship at Vassar to the girl who passed the best final examinations during the four years of its course. Barbara had won the highest honors in her freshman and sophomore years, but she had two more winters of hard work ahead of her.

"I wonder," she thought at last, "if I can persuade Ruth to go to college with me?" Then she must have fallen into a little doze.

Readers of the preceding volume, "The Automobile Girls at Newport," will remember how the famous little club, known as "The Automobile Girls" came to be organized, and they are familiar with the exciting and humorous incidents of that journey in Ruth Stuart's motor car. There were many adventures along the way, including mysterious encounters with a gentlemanly young rascal, known to the police as "The Boy Raffles." The same "Raffles" afterwards turned up at Newport, where the girls for several weeks led a life of thrilling interest. "The Automobile Girls" it was who had caught "Raffles" red-handed, and who saved Bab's snobbish cousin, Gladys Le Baron, from falling in love with him.

Six weeks before, on their return from the trip to Newport, "The Automobile Girls" had disbanded. Mr. Stuart had given a dinner in

their honor, and at the close of the meal, he formally presented each of the girls with a miniature model of Ruth's motor car, forming pins of red enamel about the size of a dime.

"You must wear them forever," Ruth insisted, almost in tears. "Who knows what luck they may bring to us? Remember this isn't a real breaking up of 'The Automobile Girls'; it is only an '*auf wiedersehen*.'"

The morning after Mr. Stuart's dinner, Grace left Kingsbridge to visit her brother. Later, Mr. Stuart and his sister, Miss Stuart, bore Ruth away to spend several weeks with some relatives in northern New York.

Ruth confided to Bab her grief at leaving them.

"I perfectly hate to go," she protested. "Just think, Bab, how soon I shall have to go back to Chicago, and leave you here in New Jersey. Other people are well enough in their places, but they are not my Barbara, Mollie and Grace!"

It was after this confidence, that Bab made Ruth solemnly promise to pay them a visit before she returned home.

Barbara opened her eyes suddenly. Had she been asleep and dreamed of Ruth? She could almost hear her voice and laugh. Some one was coming along the path. She could hear the dead leaves crunch under flying feet.

"Barbara, my Barbara!" Was it Mollie's voice calling her?

"Here I am," cried Bab faintly.

Through the trees running straight toward her, her eyes shining, her cheeks aglow, was Ruth Stuart. Barbara tried to leap up.

"Sit down, you poor dear, do," Ruth commanded. "What have you done to your silly little self? Never mind; here is your friend and always devoted slave come to your rescue."

"Where did you come from?" inquired Bab, weakly.

"Out of the everywhere into the here. Father and Mollie will be along in a few seconds and explain to you. I simply couldn't wait for them. Another dear friend of yours is up the road desiring to offer you assistance. You may recall 'Mr. A. Bubble.'"

Ruth took out the flask of beef tea which she always carried on a motor trip, and made Barbara drink a few swallows. "Now," she declared, "I will try to tell you how I happen to be here. Three days ago I told father I simply couldn't bear to be away from Kingsbridge twenty-four hours longer. So he and I decided that as soon as manners would permit we should put the automobile in commission and fly to you as fast as we could. And here we are! Besides, just think how quickly the holiday time is passing. I have another scheme — but here come Mollie and father!"

Mr. Stuart and Mollie were approaching quickly.

"Let me help you, Barbara," said Mr. Stuart, putting his strong arm around the injured girl and nearly lifting her from the ground. "Can you manage to walk? Ruth, you help from the other side. It is not far to the road, and once we get you there, the auto will soon take you home to that little mother of yours."

"I declare I would just like to kiss 'Mr. A. Bubble,' if I knew an appropriate place," declared Barbara, when she was at last safely stowed away in the automobile. Her lame foot was propped up on soft cushions while close beside her sat her beloved Ruth holding her hand. Mollie was sitting in front with Mr. Stuart.

"Tell me," Barbara continued, "no one has properly explained it to me how you happened to be at the right place just at the right moment? And how did Mollie find you to tell you I was concealed in the woods with a sprained ankle? It's too much for me. Please explain?"

"Not so fast, Miss Thurston, if you please," pleaded Mr. Stuart. "Ruth and I would like to be regarded as angels dropped from the sky, but the truth must be told! She and I were speeding along this very road, a little faster than is perfectly proper, as we were hoping to make our way before dusk to the home of a charming lady, Mrs. Thurston, who lives with her two attractive daughters, in Laurel Cottage, Kingsbridge. What did we see? A small, excited girl ahead of us, who seemed to be trying to run faster than our auto could travel. Nevertheless, we caught up with her. Who do you think she was? Miss Mollie Thurston! We were all so surprised that it must have taken us quite a minute to explain matters to each other."

"You can imagine," added Mistress Mollie from the front seat, "how jolly glad I was!"

For some time Mrs. Thurston had been anxiously awaiting her daughters' return. She was standing at the gate of her home, when a familiar chug, chug, chug, sounded up the road. "I must be dreaming," she thought. "I am so worried at the girls being out late that I imagine I hear Ruth's automobile bringing them home to me. How lonely it has been for us all since Ruth and her father went away!"

"Chug, chug, chug," the noise sounded louder than ever. A splash of red appeared at the turn of the road, a siren whistle blew, and a well-known, crimson motor car rapidly approached her gate. Mrs. Thurston rubbed her eyes. It was the Stuart's automobile and no other. Sitting enthroned in it was that gentleman and his daughter. And, could it be possible? Barbara and Mollie, as well!

Mrs. Thurston's gentle face glowed with pleasure. Swiftly as a girl she threw open her gate and was waiting on the sidewalk when the car stopped in front of her with a flourish.

"I am so delighted to see you," she said, extending her hand to Mr. Stuart and kissing Ruth on both cheeks. "Where did you find my daughters? But what's the matter with you, Bab?" she asked, as she noticed her child's pale cheeks.

"Nothing, now, mother," said Bab, hopping up, but sitting down again just as promptly. "I have sprained my ankle a little, not very much. I would like to get into the house to take off my shoe. It pinches until I feel like the mean sister trying to squeeze her foot into Cinderella's slipper." 19

"Come on in with me, every one of you," she pleaded. "Dear Mr. Stuart, you are not going to take Ruth up to the hotel with you for even one night. Remember, you promised she was to visit us, as soon as you returned."

"Do let me stay, father," coaxed Ruth, dancing after them. "I have no trunk to worry about at present. Aunt Sallie is coming back, day after to-morrow, and she is to bring my trunk with her. Father and I traveled all the way in the automobile."

Mrs. Thurston followed Mr. Stuart out as he was saying good-bye. He had agreed to leave Ruth with them. "Mr. Stuart, you can go to your hotel, if you wish to engage your room, but you must come back and have tea with us. We have hot rolls, honey, and fresh milk for supper. There is no use in your denying that is your favorite evening meal."

"I don't want to deny it, Mrs. Thurston," was Mr. Stuart's answer, as he stepped into his car. "I will come back with pleasure. On my way to the hotel I shall call at the doctor's and ask him to come around and look after Bab's foot."