

the library to the dining room, through the dining-room into a rear hall which led out upon a back porch. From the back porch they descended to the yard and went on to the great old rambling barn and carriage shed. At a tap on the door from Bertha the great nail-studded door swung open and the guests entered. Then they stood—open-mouthed and open-eyed, wondering. Before them was a very pretty picture. The rafters of the barn had been draped with evergreen boughs, making the ceiling over their heads to resemble the interlaced branches of a forest. About the side walls other branches hung, with here and there great bunches of red berries. And about the floor under their feet soft hay was scattered, and in every nook and corner of the old barn stood pots and tubs of flowering plants, palms and ferns. Mrs. Avery had robbed her conservatory for the occasion. Across one corner of the barn was stretched a low green curtain on which was printed these words; "The fish pond." And lying conveniently near was a long fishing pole with hook.

Down the middle of the room—spread on the soft hay—was the picnic cloth, and over it was placed the plates, glasses, cups and the many good things to eat. From the green branches overhead hung pretty lighted lanterns, adding to the beauty of general effect. Strong daylight poured in through two big windows, but this did not destroy the lantern light which was for the purpose of giving illumination to the center of the "spread." At either end of the barn was a little coal oil heater, and beside one sat Mrs. Avery, dressed like a grandmother of long ago, knitting, while at the other stove sat Susan, an old family servant in the Avery home, and she was also knitting. Mrs. Avery and Susan were there to keep careful eyes on the heating stoves, for they realized that a serious accident might occur should the children in their play knock one of the stoves over. So this precaution was carefully observed. After the picnic guests had enjoyed themselves running about admiring the beautiful "natural forest" they were invited to sit at the picnic spread. Then four waitresses appeared, dressed like little milkmaids. They carried pails on their arms from which they dipped hot tea and chocolate to fill the cups and glasses for the guests.

After luncheon was over the waitresses quickly took away dishes, cloth and leftover food, leaving the floor of the barn open. Then Susan gathered up the hay, piled it in a corner (Mrs. Avery telling the guests a story while this work was in progress), and soon the floor was as clean as that belonging to a house. Suddenly some music began in a corner of the barn, for a small orchestra had entered quietly during luncheon, and had secreted themselves behind some palms and ferns. While the orchestra played some of the boys and girls danced, while others visited the fishing pond trying their luck at fishing. One guest at a time threw the line over the curtain, and on hauling it out again would find a comical little toy fastened to the hook. Had the guests been watchful they would have seen one of the little milkmaids slip behind the curtain just as the fishing began. It was she who selected the "fish" hooked.

When 5 o'clock came Mrs. Avery had to call out: "Time for the park to close. All will please leave the grounds by the front gate." "Oh, what a delightful picnic!" cried May Rogers. "I never had so much fun in all my life. It was a real woods picnic, for sure." And this was the verdict of each guest present, and as they reluctantly left the "park" and returned to the house for their wraps, they voted Bertha's picnic the "best thing of the season." "Well, I hoped you'd like my picnic," smiled Bertha. "But we owe most of the plan to dear mamma, who knows how much children love a picnic—even in winter."

The Discontented Deer

A deer once became dissatisfied with his lot. His home was on a high plateau which was well covered with woods and broken by beautiful streams which fell in bubbling cascades at the edge of the plateau to the valley below.

"That is a beautiful valley," declared the deer one day as he stood and looked at the pretty landscape spread out before him, but many hundred feet below. "How I should like to live there, and yet it is impossible for me to climb down the steep sides of this immense precipice. Just now I saw a little sparrow who had been twittering in a bush at my side spread his wings and swiftly fly down, down, down, to the meadow on the bank of the valley stream. Why should not I fly?"

And the foolish deer thought so long on this subject that he actually became possessed of the idea that he could fly.

"Here I go," he cried at last; "here I go to the velvet meadows and the cool shade of yonder valley!"

Then he plunged forward into the air. Well, there isn't anything more to tell about the deer, but it may be said that on that selfsame day the jackals of that beautiful valley had a feast of boneless venison such as they had never enjoyed before.



WHAT DID THE CHILDREN DO?

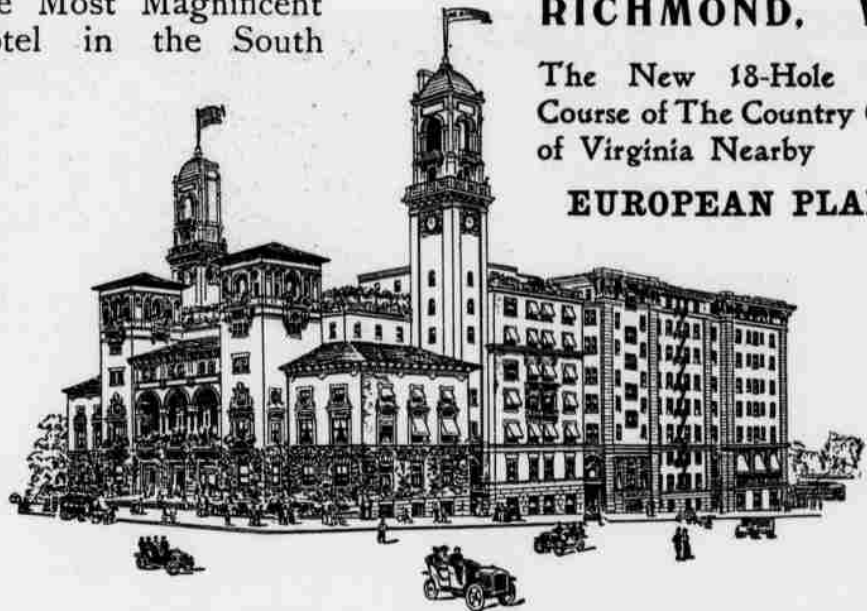
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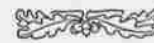
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