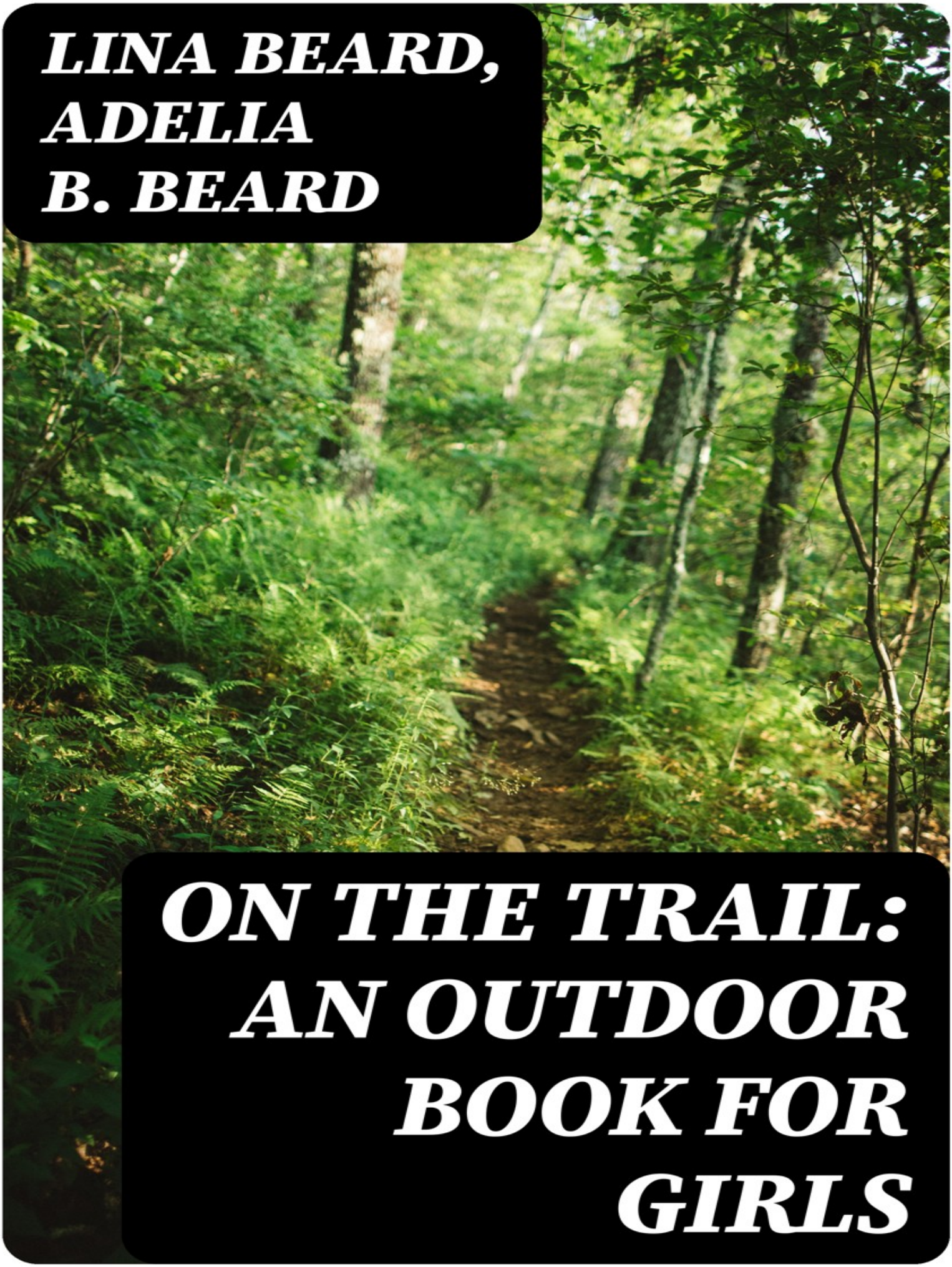
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ON THE TRAIL:
AN OUTDOOR
BOOK FOR
GIRLS

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On the Trail: An Outdoor Book for Girls

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What the Outdoor World Can Do for Girls. How to Find the Trail and How to Keep It

There is a something in you, as in every one, every man, woman, girl, and boy, that requires the tonic life of the wild. You may not know it, many do not, but there is a part of your nature that only the wild can reach, satisfy, and develop. The much-housed, overheated, overdressed, and over-entertained life of most girls is artificial, and if one does not turn away from and leave it for a while, one also becomes greatly artificial and must go through life not knowing the joy, the strength, the poise that real outdoor life can give.

What is it about a true woodsman that instantly compels our respect, that sets him apart from the men who might be of his class in village or town and puts him in a class by himself, though he may be exteriorly rough and have little or no book education? The real Adirondack or the North Woods guide, alert, clean-limbed, clear-eyed, hard-muscled, bearing his pack-basket or duffel-bag on his back, doing all the hard work of the camp, never loses his poise or the simple dignity which he shares with all the things of the wild. It is bred in him, is a part of himself and the life he leads. He is as conscious of his superior knowledge of the woods as an astronomer is of his knowledge of the stars,

and patiently tolerates the ignorance and awkwardness of the "tenderfoot" from the city. Only a keen sense of humor can make this toleration possible, for I have seen things done by a city-dweller at camp that would enrage a woodsman, unless the irresistibly funny side of it made him laugh his inward laugh that seldom reaches the surface.

To live for a while in the wild strengthens the muscles of your mind as well as of your body. Flabby thoughts and flabby muscles depart together and are replaced by enthusiasm and vigor of purpose, by strength of limb and chest and back. To *have* seems not so desirable as to *be*. When you have once come into sympathy with this world of the wild—which holds our cultivated, artificial world in the hollow of its hand and gives it life—new joy, good, wholesome, heartfelt joy, will well up within you. New and absorbing interests will claim your attention. You will breathe deeper, stand straighter. The small, petty things of life will lose their seeming importance and great things will look larger and infinitely more worth while. You will know that the woods, the fields, the streams and great waters bear wonderful messages for you, and, little by little, you will learn to read them.

The majority of people who visit the up-to-date hotels of the Adirondacks, which their wily proprietors call camps, may think they see the wild and are living in it. But for them it is only a big picnic-ground through which they rush with unseeing eyes and whose cloisters they invade with unfeeling hearts, seemingly for the one purpose of building a fire, cooking their lunch, eating it, and then hurrying back to the comforts of the hotel and the gayety of hotel life.

One can generally pass around obstructions like this on the trail.

At their careless and noisy approach the forest suddenly withdraws itself into its deep reserve and reveals no secrets. It is as if they entered an empty house and passed through deserted rooms, but all the time the intruders are stealthily watched by unseen, hostile, or frightened eyes. Every form of moving life is stilled and magically fades into its background. The tawny rabbit halts amid the dry leaves of a fallen tree. No one sees it. The sinuous weasel slips silently under a rock by the side of the trail and is unnoticed. The mother grouse crouches low amid the underbrush and her little ones follow her example, but the careless company has no time to observe and drifts quickly by. Only the irrepressible red squirrel might be seen, but isn't, when he loses his balance and drops to a lower branch in his efforts to miss nothing of the excitement of the invasion.

This is not romance, it is truth. To think sentimentally about nature, to sit by a babbling brook and try to put your supposed feelings into verse, will not help you to know the wild. The only way to cultivate the sympathy and understanding which will enable you to feel its heart-beats, is to go to it humbly, ready to see the wonders it can show; ready to appreciate and love its beauties and ready to meet on friendly and cordial terms the animal life whose home it is. The wild world is, indeed, a wonderful world; how wonderful and interesting we learn only by degrees and actual experience. It is free, but not lawless; to enter it fully we must obey these laws which are slowly and silently impressed upon us. It is a wholesome, life-giving, inspiring world, and when you have learned to conform to its rules you are met on every hand by friendly messengers to guide you and teach you the ways of the wild: wild birds, wild fruits and plants, and gentle, furtive, wild animals. You cannot put their messages into words, but you can feel them; and then, suddenly, you no longer care for soft cushions and rugs, for shaded lamps, dainty fare and finery, for paved streets and concrete walks. You want to plant your feet upon the earth in its natural state, however rugged or boggy it may be. You want your cushions to be of the soft moss-beds of the piny woods, and, with the unparalleled sauce of a healthy, hearty appetite, you want to eat your dinner out of doors, cooked over the outdoor fire, and to drink water from a birch-bark cup, brought cool and dripping from the bubbling spring.

You want, oh! how you want to sleep on a springy bed of balsam boughs, wrapped in soft, warm, woollen blankets with the sweet night air of all outdoors to breathe while you sleep. You want your flower-garden, not with great and gorgeous masses of bloom in evident, orderly beds, but keeping always charming surprises for unexpected times and in unsuspected places. You want the flowers that grow

without your help in ways you have not planned; that hold the enchantment of the wilderness. Some people are born with this love for the wild, some attain it, but in either case the joy is there, and to find it you must seek it. Your chosen trail may lead through the primeval forests or into the great western deserts or plains; or it may reach only left-over bits of the wild which can be found at no great distance from home. Even a bit of meadow or woodland, even an uncultivated field on the hilltop, will give you a taste of the wild; and if you strike the trail in the right spirit you will find upon arrival that these remnants of the wild world have much to show and to teach you. There are the sky, the clouds, the lungfuls of pure air, the growing things which send their roots where they will and not in a man-ordered way. There is the wild life that obeys no man's law: the insects, the birds, and small four-footed animals. On all sides you will find evidences of wild life if you will look for it. Here you may make camp for a day and enjoy that day as much as if it were one of many in a several weeks' camping trip.

However, this is not to be a book of glittering generalities but, as far as it can be made, one of practical helpfulness in outdoor life; therefore when you are told to strike the trail you must also be told how to do it.

When You Strike the Trail

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For any journey, by rail or by boat, one has a general idea of the direction to be taken, the character of the land or water to be crossed, and of what one will find at the end. So it should be in striking the trail. Learn all you can about the path you are to follow. Whether it is plain or obscure, wet or dry; where it leads; and its length, measured more by time

than by actual miles. A smooth, even trail of five miles will not consume the time and strength that must be expended upon a trail of half that length which leads over uneven ground, varied by bogs and obstructed by rocks and fallen trees, or a trail that is all up-hill climbing. If you are a novice and accustomed to walking only over smooth and level ground, you must allow more time for covering the distance than an experienced person would require and must count upon the expenditure of more strength, because your feet are not trained to the wilderness paths with their pitfalls and traps for the unwary, and every nerve and muscle will be strained to secure a safe foothold amid the tangled roots, on the slippery, moss-covered logs, over precipitous rocks that lie in your path. It will take time to pick your way over boggy places where the water oozes up through the thin, loamy soil as through a sponge; and experience alone will teach you which hummock of grass or moss will make a safe stepping-place and will not sink beneath your weight and soak your feet with hidden water. Do not scorn to learn all you can about the trail you are to take, although your questions may call forth superior smiles. It is not that you hesitate to encounter difficulties, but that you may prepare for them. In unknown regions take a responsible guide with you, unless the trail is short, easily followed, and a frequented one. Do not go alone through lonely places; and, being on the trail, keep it and try no explorations of your own, at least not until you are quite familiar with the country and the ways of the wild.

Difficulties of the Adirondack trail.

Facsimile of drawing made by a trailer (not the author) after a day in the wilds of an Adirondack forest. Not a good drawing, perhaps, but a good illustration.

Blazing the Trail

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A woodsman usually blazes his trail by chipping with his axe the trees he passes, leaving white scars on their trunks, and to follow such a trail you stand at your first tree until you see the blaze on the next, then go to that and look for the one farther on; going in this way from tree to tree you keep the trail though it may, underfoot, be overgrown and indistinguishable.

If you must make a trail of your own, blaze it as you go by bending down and breaking branches of trees, underbrush,

and bushes. Let the broken branches be on the side of bush or tree in the direction you are going, but bent down away from that side, or toward the bush, so that the lighter underside of the leaves will show and make a plain trail. Make these signs conspicuous and close together, for in returning, a dozen feet without the broken branch will sometimes confuse you, especially as everything has a different look when seen from the opposite side. By this same token it is a wise precaution to look back frequently as you go and impress the homeward-bound landmarks on your memory. If in your wanderings you have branched off and made ineffectual or blind trails which lead nowhere, and, in returning to camp, you are led astray by one of them, do not leave the false trail and strike out to make a new one, but turn back and follow the false trail to its beginning, for it must lead to the true trail again. *Don't lose sight of your broken branches.*

Blazing the trail by bending down and breaking branches.

If you carry a hatchet or small axe you can make a permanent trail by blazing the trees as the woodsmen do. Kephart advises blazing in this way: make one blaze on the side of the tree away from the camp and two blazes on the side toward the camp. Then when you return you look for the *one* blaze. In leaving camp again to follow the same trail, you look for the *two* blazes. If you should lose the trail and reach it again you will know to a certainty which direction to take, for two blazes mean *camp on this side*; one blaze, *away from camp on this side*.

To Know an Animal Trail

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To know an animal trail from one made by men is quite important. It is easy to be led astray by animal trails, for they are often well defined and, in some cases, well beaten. To the uninitiated the trails will appear the same, but there is a difference which, in a recent number of *Field and Stream*, Mr. Arthur Rice defines very clearly in this way: "Men step *on* things. Animals step *over* or around things." Then again an animal trail frequently passes under bushes and low branches of trees where men would cut or break their way through. To follow an animal trail is to be led sometimes to water, often to a bog or swamp, at times to the animal's den, which in the case of a bear might not be exactly pleasant.

Returning to camp by the blazed trail.
Note the blazed trees.

Lost in the Woods

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We were in the wilderness of an Adirondack forest making camp for the day and wanted to see the beaver-dam which, we were told, was on the edge of a near-by lake. The guide was busy cooking dinner and we would not wait for his leisure, but leaving the rest of the party, we started off confidently, just two of us, down the perfectly plain trail. For a short distance there was a beaten path, then, suddenly, the trail came to an abrupt end. We looked this side and that. No trail, no appearance of there ever having been one. With a careless wave of his arm, the guide had said: "Keep in that direction." "That" being to the left, to the left we

therefore turned and stormed our way through thicket and bramble, breaking branches as we went. Sliding down declivities, scrambling over fallen trees, dipping beneath low-hung branches, we finally came out upon the shore of the lake and found that we had struck the exact spot where the beaver-dam was located.

It was only a short distance from camp and it had not taken us long to make it, but when we turned back we warmly welcomed the sight of our blazed trail, for all else was strange and unfamiliar. Going there had been glimpses of the water now and then to guide us, returning we had no landmarks. Even my sense of direction, usually to be relied on and upon which I had been tempted to depend solely, seemed to play me false when we reached a place where our blazing was lost sight of. The twilight stillness of the great forest enveloped us; there was no sign of our camp, no sound of voices. A few steps to our left the ground fell away in a steep precipice which, in going, we had passed unnoticed and which, for the moment, seemed to obstruct our way. Then turning to the right we saw a streak of light through the trees that looked, at first, like water where we felt sure no water could be if we were on the right path; but we soon recognized this as smoke kept in a low cloud by the trees—the smoke of our camp-fire. That was our beacon, and we were soon on the trail again and back in camp. This is not told as an adventure, but to illustrate the fact that without a well-blazed trail it is easier to become lost in a strange forest than to find one's way.

You may strike the trail with the one object in view of reaching your destination as quickly as possible. This will help you to become agile and sure-footed, to cover long distances in a short time, but it will not allow of much observation until your mind has become alert and your eyes trained to see quickly the things of the forests and plains,