“O, I know; she will come here and try to flirt with every blessed fellow, get everybody crazy, and break up all our plans for a quiet summer. Why can’t girls be sensible?” and Chris growled as the Great Bear at which he was looking might have done.

“See here,” said Grace, suddenly, after a little silence, “there’s some truth in that, for we all know how crushable you fellows are, especially Chris.”

We smiled softly at this, for Chris was never known to look at a girl unless he had to. The girls, at this point, held a whispered consultation, the result of which was that Alice sat up and said:—

“Grace and I think that the only way to settle this, and keep you boys in the reasonably agreeable condition you have been in so far, is to disarm Kate beforehand by forming an Anti-Flirtation Society; and I name Chris for president, with unlimited powers to punish all who break the rules.”

“What are the rules?” I asked.

“What if she won’t join?” said Harry.

“And what if I object?” inquired Chris.

“Why, you simpleton,” the rules are that you mustn’t flirt at all this summer; and Chris has to agree to it, for we will make him. As for Kate, she will have to submit, for she is to be with us entirely; and now that you have all promised, she can’t flirt, for it takes two to do that.”

We hadn’t promised at all, but Alice didn’t mind such a little thing as that. She knew well enough we would do what she and Grace said we must. Then Chris said, a little exultantly that he supposed this rule was to hold for all of us. Harry was beginning to remonstrate, when one of the girls coughed violently, and it seemed as if a speck of light dropped from the hammock and was extinguished by a little foot. “Let’s go in, or we shall catch cold,” said the other girl.

“Wouldn’t you like some cloves first?” wickedly suggested Harry. “There may be people in the parlor.”

“Oh, you horrid thing!” cried the girls, as they disentangled themselves from the hammock and ran into the cottage.

“’Beware the parlor,’ the old man cried,” sung out Harry.

“Now you have done it,” said Chris.

“I don’t see but what we are all in the same box,” Harry sighed, ignoring the remark Chris made; “only it isn’t so hard for you fellows as it is for me, for the girls are your sisters. Hang it, it’s natural for a fellow to flirt in the summer.”

“This will be a novelty for you, then,” remarked Chris, dryly.

The next afternoon the old tally-ho brought Miss Kate Swinton and her trunks. Our crowd was out in full force waiting for her. As she descended from the top of the coach, Alice presented us. She was dressed in a light pongee silk, and in spite of the dust which covered her, she looked exceedingly fresh and handsome. Chris, even, was struck, for after he had condescended to look at her, he kept on looking.

She was tired, so the girls carried her off to the cottage, telling us not to come around until after supper. We fellows were boarding at the hotel.

That evening we all felt somewhat constrained at first, for we thought of our new society, and wondered — that is, we fellows — whether Miss Swinton knew of the plot formed against her. But this feeling soon wore off, and we had a jolly evening; for we made a raid on the ice-cream saloon, walked to the Bluff to see the moon rise, and discussed plans enough to fill two summers.

For the next month we enjoyed ourselves in a hearty, childlike way, as if we had all been brother and sisters. It did us all good, I think. The night before the Fourth we whooped it up in a way which astonished the oldest inhabitant and set the small boys crazy. Even Chris stole dry-goods boxes for the bonfire that night. We tramped all over the country, rode on buckboards, investigated a hornet’s nest,— only one,— played tennis until the owner of the court would have got rich if we hadn’t forgotten to pay him, inflated the trade in lemon-sticks at