WELLS CAROLYN

MARJORIE AT SEACOTE

Carolyn Wells
Marjorie at Seacote

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=36323372
Marjorie at Seacote:

Содержание

CHAPTER I 4
CHAPTER II 17
CHAPTER III 29
CHAPTER IV 40
CHAPTER V 52
CHAPTER VI 64
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 65

Carolyn Wells
Marjorie at Seacote

CHAPTER I
KITTY'S DINNER

"Kitty-Cat Kitty is going away,
Going to Grandma's, all summer to stay.
And so all the Maynards will weep and will bawl,
Till Kitty-Cat Kitty comes home in the fall."

This affecting ditty was being sung with great gusto by King and Marjorie, while Kitty, her mood divided between smiles and tears, was quietly appreciative.

The very next day, Kitty was to start for Morristown, to spend the summer with Grandma Sherwood, and to-night the "Farewell Feast" was to be celebrated.

Every year one of the Maynard children spent the summer months with their grandmother, and this year it was Kitty's turn. The visit was always a pleasant one, and greatly enjoyed by the small visitor, but there was always a wrench at parting, for the Maynard family were affectionate and deeply devoted to one another.

The night before the departure was always celebrated by a festival of farewell, and at this feast tokens were presented, and speeches made, and songs sung, all of which went far to dispel sad or gloomy feelings.

The Maynards were fond of singing. They were willing to sing "ready-made" songs, and often did, but they liked better to make up songs of their own, sometimes using familiar tunes and sometimes inventing an air as they went along. Even if not quite in keeping with the rules for classic music, these airs were pleasing in their own ears, and that was all that was necessary.

So, when King and Midget composed the touching lines which head this chapter and sang them to the tune of "The Campbells are Coming," they were so pleased that they repeated them many times.

This served to pass pleasantly the half-hour that must yet elapse before dinner would be announced.

"Well, Kit," remarked Kingdon, in a breathing pause between songs, "we'll miss you lots, o' course, but you'll have a gay old time at Grandma's. That Molly Moss is a whole team in herself."

"She's heaps of fun, Kitsie," said Marjorie, "but she's chock-a-block full of mischief. But you won't tumble head over heels into all her mischiefs, like I did! 'Member how I sprained my ankle, sliding down the barn roof with her?"

"No, of course I wouldn't do anything like that," agreed the sedate Kitty. "But we'll have lots of fun with that tree-house; I'm going to sit up there and read, on pleasant days."

"H'm,—lucky,—you know what, King!"

"H'm,—yes! Keep still, Mops. You'll give it away."

"Oh, a secret about a present," cried Kitty; "something for the tree-house, I know!"

"Maybe 'tis, and maybe 'tain't," answered King, with a mysterious wink at Marjorie.

"Me buyed present for Kitty," said Rosamond, smiling sweetly; "gold an' blue,—oh, a bootiful present."

"Hush, hush, Rosy Posy, you mustn't tell," said her brother. "Presents are always surprises. Hey, girls, here's Father!"

Mr. Maynard's appearance was usually a signal for a grand rush, followed by a series of bear hugs and a general scramble, but to-night, owing to festive attire, the Maynard quartette were a little more demure.

"Look out for my hair-ribbons, King!" cried Midget, for without such warning, hair-ribbons usually felt first the effects of the good-natured scrimmage.

And then Mrs. Maynard appeared, her pretty rose-colored gown of soft silk trailing behind her on the floor.

"What a dandy mother!" exclaimed King; "all dressed up, and a flower in her hair!"

This line sounded singable to Marjorie, so she tuned up:

"All dressed up, and a flower in her hair,
To give her a hug, I wouldn't dare;
For she would feel pretty bad, I think,
If anything happened to that there pink!"

Then King added a refrain, and in a moment they had all joined hands and were dancing round Mrs. Maynard and singing:

"Hooray, hooray, for our mother fair!
Hooray, hooray, for the flower in her hair!
All over the hills and far away,
There's no one so sweet as Mothery May!"

Being accustomed to boisterous adulation from her children, Mrs. Maynard bore her honors gracefully, and then they all went out to dinner.

As Maiden of Honor, Kitty was escorted by her father; next came Mrs. Maynard and Kingdon, and then Marjorie and Rosy Posy. The table had extra decorations of flowers and pink-shaded candles, and at Kitty's place was a fascinating looking lot of tissue-papered and ribbon-tied parcels.

"Isn't it funny," said sedate and philosophical Kitty, "I love to go to Grandma's, and yet I hate to leave you all, and yet, I can't do one without doing the other!"

"'Tis strange, indeed, Kit!" agreed her father; "as Mr. Shakespeare says, 'Yet every sweet with sour is tempered still.' Life is like lemonade, sour and sweet both."

"It's good enough," said Kitty, contentedly, looking at her array of bundles. "I guess I'll open these now."

"That's what they're there for," said Mrs. Maynard, so Kitty excitedly began to untie the ribbons.

"I'll go slowly," she said, pulling gently at a ribbon bow, "then they'll last longer."

"Now, isn't that just like you, Kit!" exclaimed Marjorie. "I'd snatch the papers off so fast you couldn't see me jerk."

"I know you would," said Kitty, simply.

The sisters were very unlike, for Midget's ways were impulsive and impatient, while Kitty was slow and careful. But finally the papers came off, and revealed the lovely gifts.

Mrs. Maynard had made a pretty silk workbag, which could be spread out, or gathered up close on its ribbon. When outspread, it showed a store of needles and thread, of buttons, hooks, tapes, —everything a little girl could need to keep her clothes in order.

"Oh, Mother, it's *perfect*!" cried Kitty, ecstatically. "I *love* those cunning little pockets, with all *sewy* things in them! And a darling silver thimble! And a silver tape measure, and a silver-topped emery! Oh, I do believe I'll sew *all* the time this summer!"

"Pooh, *I* wouldn't!" said Marjorie. "The things *are* lovely, but I'd rather play than sew."

"Sewing *is* play, I think," and Kitty fingered over her treasures lovingly. "Grandma will help me with my patterns, and I'm going to piece a silk teachest quilt. Oh, Mother, it will be *such* fun!"

"Call *that* fun!" and Marjorie looked disdainfully at her sister. "Fun is racing around and playing tag, and cutting up jinks generally!"

"For you it is," Kitty agreed, amiably, "but not for me. I like what I like."

"That's good philosophy, Kitty," said her father. "Stick to it always. Like what you like, and don't be bothered by other people's comments or opinions. Now, what's in that smallish, flattish, whitish parcel?"

The parcel in question proved to be a watch, a dear little gold watch. Kitty had never owned one before, and it almost took her breath away.

"Mine?" she exclaimed, in wonder. "All mine?"

"Yes, every bit yours," said Mr. Maynard, smiling at her. "Every wheel and spring, every one of its three hands, every one of its twelve hours are all, all yours. Do you like it?"

"Like it! I can't think of any words to tell you how much I like it."

"I'll think of some for you," said the accommodating Marjorie. "You could say it's the grandest, gloriousest, gorgeousest, magnificentest present you ever had!"

"Yes, I could say that," Kitty agreed, "but I never should have thought of it. I 'most always say a thing is lovely. Now, what in the world is this?"

"This" proved to be a well-stocked portfolio, the gift of King. There were notepaper and envelopes and a pen and pencils and stamps and everything to write letters with.

"I picked out all the things myself," King explained, "because it's nicer that way than the ready furnished ones. Do you like it, Kit?"

"Yes, indeedy! And I shall write my first letter to you, because

you gave it to me."

"Oh, Kitty-Cat Kit, a letter she writ,
And sent it away, to her brother one day,"

chanted Marjorie, and, as was their custom, they all sang the song after her, some several times over.

"Now for mine," Midget said, as Kitty slowly untied the next parcel. It was two volumes of Fairy Tales, which literature was Kitty's favorite reading.

"Oh, lovely!" she exclaimed. "On summer afternoons you can think of me, sitting out in the tree-house reading these. I shall pretend I'm a Fairy Princess. These are beautiful stories, I can see that already."

Kitty's quick eye had caught an interesting page, and forgetting all else, she became absorbed in the book at once. In a moment, the page was turned, and Kitty read on and on, oblivious to time or place.

"Hi, there, Kitsie! Come out o' that!" cried King. "You can read all summer,—*now* you must associate with your family."

"I didn't mean to," said Kitty, shutting the book quickly, and looking round apologetically; "but it's all about a fairy godmother, and a lovely princess lady,—oh, Mopsy, it's *fine*!"

A pair of little blue enamelled pins was Rosamond's present, and Kitty pinned them on her shoulders at once, to see how they looked. All pronounced the effect excellent, and Rosy Posy

clapped her little fat hands in glee.

"Mine's the prettiest present!" she said. "Mine's the booflest!"

"Yes, Babykins," said Kitty, "yours is the booflest,—but they're all lovely."

The Farewell Feast included all of Kitty's favorite dishes, and as most of them were also favorites with the other children, it was satisfactory all round.

"You must write to us often, Kit," said King; "I gave you those writing things so you'd be sure to."

"Yes, I will; but I don't know yet where you're all going to be."

"I don't know yet myself," said Mr. Maynard, "but it will be somewhere near the sea, if possible. Will you like the seashore, Kiddies,—you that are going?"

"I shall," said Marjorie, promptly. "I'll *love* it. May we go bathing every day? And can I have a bathing suit,—red, trimmed with white?"

"I 'spect you can," said her mother, smiling at her. "What color do you want, King?"

"Oh, I think dark blue would suit my manly beauty! What are you going to have, Father?"

"I think dark blue will be our choice, my boy. It swims better than anything else. But first we must find a roof to cover our heads. I've about decided on one,—if I can get it. It's a bungalow."

"What's a bungalow?" asked Marjorie. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Ho, ho! Never heard of a bungalow!" said King. "Why, a bungalow is a,—is a,–"

"Well, is a what?" asked Midget, impatiently.

"Why, it's a bungalow! That's what it is."

"Fine definition, King!" said his father. "But since you undertook to do so, see if you can't give its meaning better than that. What *is* a, bungalow?"

"Well, let me see. It's a house,—I guess it's a low, one-storied house, and that's why they call it bungalow. Is that it?"

"You're right about the one story; the rest is, I think, your own invention. Originally, the bungalow was the sort of a house they have in India, a one-storied affair, with a thatched roof, and verandas all round it. But the ones they build now, in this country, are often much more elaborate than that. Sometimes they have one story, sometimes more. The one I'm trying to get for the summer is at Seacote, and it's what they call a story and a half. That is, it has an upper floor, but the rooms are under a slanting roof, and have dormer windows."

"Sounds good to me," said King. "Do you think you'll catch it, Dad?"

"I hope so. Some other person has the refusal of it, but he's doubtful about taking it. So it may yet fall to our lot."

"I hope so!" cried Marjorie. "At the seashore for a whole summer! My! what fun! Can we dig in the sand?"

"Well, rather, my child! That's what the sand is there for. Kitty, you were at the seashore last summer. Did you dig in the

sand?"

"Yes, every day; and it was lovely. But this year I'm glad I'm going to Grandma's. It's more restful."

They all laughed at Kitty's desire for rest, and Marjorie said:

"*I* didn't have such a restful time at Grandma's. Except when I sprained my ankle,—I rested enough then! But you won't do anything like that, Kit!"

"I hope not, I'm sure. Nor I won't fall down the well, either!"

"Oh, we didn't *fall* down the well. We just *went* down, to get cooled off."

"Well, I'm not going to try it. I shall sit in the tree-house and read every afternoon, and sew with Grandma in the mornings."

"Kit, you're a dormouse," said Kingdon; "I believe you'd like to sleep half the year."

"'Deed I wouldn't. Just because I don't like rambunctious play doesn't mean I want to sleep all the time! Does it, Father?"

"Not a bit of it. But you children must 'like what you like' and not comment on others' 'likes.' See?"

"Yes, sir," said King, understanding the kindly rebuke. "Hullo, Kit, here's one of your best 'likes'! Here's pink ice-cream coming!"

This was indeed one of Kitty's dearest "likes," and as none of the Maynards disliked it, it rapidly disappeared.

"Now, we'll have an entertainment," said King as, after dinner, they all went back to the pleasant living-room. "As Kitty is the chief pebble on the beach this evening, she shall choose what sort

of an entertainment. Games, or what?"

"No, just a real entertainment," said Kitty; "a programme one, you know. Each one must sing a song or speak a piece, or something like that. *I'll* be the audience, and you can all be performers."

"All right," said King; "I'll be master of ceremonies. I'll make up the programme as I go along. Ladies and gentlemen, our first number will be a speech by the Honorable Edward Maynard. Mr. Maynard will please step forward."

Mr. Maynard stepped. Assuming a pompous air, he made a low bow, first to Kitty, and then to the others.

"My dear friends," he said, "we are gathered here together this evening to extend our farewells and our hearty good wishes to the lady about to leave us. Sister, thou art mild and lovely, and we hate to see thee go; but the best of friends must sever, and you'll soon come back, you know. Listen now to our advices. Kitty, dear, for pity's sake, do not tumble in the river,—do not tumble in the lake. Many more things I could tell you as I talk in lovely rhyme, but I think it is my duty to let others share the time."

Mr. Maynard sat down amid great applause, and Kitty said, earnestly, "You are a lovely poet, Father. I wish you'd give up your other business, and just write books of poetry."

"I'm afraid, Kitsie, we wouldn't have enough money for pink ice-cream in that case," said Mr. Maynard, laughing.

"The next performeress will be Mrs. Maynard," announced the master of ceremonies.

Mother Maynard rose, smiling, and with all the airs and graces of a prima donna, went to the piano. Striking a few preliminary chords, she began to sing:

"Good-bye, Kitty; good-bye, Kitty; good-bye, Kitty,
You're going to leave us now.
Merrily we say good-bye,
Say good-bye, say good-bye;
Merrily we say good-bye
To sister Kitty-Kit."

This had a pleasant jingle, and was repeated by the whole assembly with fine effect and a large volume of noise.

"Miss Marjorie Maynard will now favor us," was the next announcement.

"This is a poem I made up myself," said Midget, modestly, "and I think it's very nice:

"When Kitty goes to Grandma's
I hope she will be good;
And be a lady-girl and do
Exactly as she should.
'Cause when *I go* to Grandma's,
I act exceeding bad;
I track up 'Liza's nice clean floor,
And make her hopping mad!"

Marjorie's poem was applauded with cheers, as they all

recognized its inherent truth.

"We next come to Miss Rosamond Maynard," King went on, "but as she has fallen asleep, I will ask that the audience kindly excuse her."

The audience kindly did so, and as it was getting near everybody's bedtime,—at least, for children,—the whole quartette was started bedward, and went away singing:

"Good-bye, Kitty, you're going to leave us now"—

CHAPTER II
TOM, DICK, AND HARRY

"Jumping Grasshoppers! What a dandy house!"

The Maynards' motor swung into the driveway of a large and pleasant looking place, whose lawn showed some sand spots here and there, and whose trees were tall pines, but whose whole effect was delightfully breezy and seashorey.

"Oh, grandiferous!" cried Marjorie, echoing her brother's enthusiastic tones, and standing up in the car, better to see their new home.

Seacote, the place chosen by Mr. Maynard for his family's summering, was on the southern shore of Long Island, not very far from Rockaway Beach. It was a sort of park or reservation in which building was under certain restrictions, and so it was made up of pleasant homes filled with pleasant people.

Fortunately, Mr. Maynard had been able to rent the bungalow he wanted, and it was this picturesque domicile that so roused King's admiration.

The house was long and low, and surrounded by verandas, some of which were screened by vines, and others shaded by striped awnings.

But what most delighted the children was the fact that the ocean rolled its crested breakers up to their very door. Not

literally to the door, for the road ran between the sea and the house, and a boardwalk was between the road and the sea. But not fifty feet from their front windows the shining waves were even now dashing madly toward them as if in tumultuous welcome.

The servants were already installed, and the open doors seemed to invite the family to come in and make themselves at home.

"Let's go straight bang through the whole house," said King, "and then outdoors afterward."

"All right," agreed Marjorie, and in their usual impetuous fashion, the two raced through the house from attic to cellar, though there really wasn't any attic, except a sort of low-ceiled loft. However, they climbed up into this, and then down through the various bedrooms on the second floor, and back to the first floor, which contained the large living-room, a spacious hall, and the dining-room and kitchen.

"It's all right," said King, nodding his head in approval. "Now outside, Midget."

Outside they flew, and took stock of their surroundings. Almost an acre of ground was theirs, and though as yet empty of special interest, King could see its possibilities.

"Room for a tennis court," he said; "then I guess we'll have a big swing, and a hammock, and a tent, and–"

"And a merry-go-round," supplemented Mr. Maynard, overhearing King's plans.

"No, not that, Father," said Marjorie, "but we *can* have swings

and things, can't we?"

"I 'spect so, Mopsy. But with the ocean and the beach, I doubt if you'll stay in this yard much."

"Oh, that's so; I forgot the ocean! Come on, Father, let's go and look at it."

So the three went down to the beach, and Marjorie, who hadn't been to the seashore since she was a small child, plumped herself down on the sand, and just gazed out at the tumbling waves.

"I don't care for the swings and things," she said. "I just want to stay here all the time, and dig and dig and dig."

As she spoke she was digging her heels into the fine white sand, and poking her hands in, and burying her arms up to her dimpled elbows.

"Oh, Father, isn't it gee-lorious! Sit down, won't you, and let us bury you in sand, all but your nose!"

"Not now," said Mr. Maynard, laughing. "Some day you may, when I'm in a bathing suit. But I don't care for pockets full of sand. Now, I'm going back to home and Mother. You two may stay down here till luncheon time if you like."

Mr. Maynard went back to the house, and King and Marjorie continued their explorations. The beach was flat and smooth, and its white sand was full of shells, and here and there a few bits of seaweed, and farther on some driftwood, and in the distance a pier, built out far into the ocean.

"Did you ever *see* such a place?" cried Marjorie, in sheer delight.

"Well, I was at the seashore last year," said King, "while you were at Grandma's."

"But it wasn't as nice as this, was it? Say it wasn't!"

"No; the sand was browner. This is the nicest sand I ever saw. Say, Mops, let's build a fire."

"What for? It isn't cold."

"No, but you always build fires on the beach. It's lots of fun. And we'll roast potatoes in it."

"All right. How do we begin?"

"Well, we gather a lot of wood first. Come on."

Marjorie came on, and they worked with a will, gathering armfuls of wood and piling it up near the spot they had selected for their fire.

"That's enough," said Marjorie, for her arms ached as she laid down her last contribution to their collection.

"You'll find it isn't much when it gets to burning. But never mind, it will make a start. I'll skin up to the house and get matches and potatoes."

"I'll go with you, 'cause I think we'd better ask Father about making this fire. It might do some harm."

"Fiddlesticks! We made a fire 'most every day last summer."

And, owing to King's knowledge and experience regarding beach fires, his father told him he might build one, and to be properly careful about not setting fire to themselves.

Then they procured potatoes and apples from the kitchen, and raced back to the beach.

"Why, where's our wood?" cried Marjorie.

Not a stick or a chip remained of their carefully gathered wood pile.

"Some one has stolen it!" said King.

"No, there's nobody around, except those people over there, and they're grown-ups. It must have been washed away by a wave."

"Pooh, the waves aren't coming up near as far as this."

"Well, there might have been a big one."

"No, it wasn't a wave. That wood was stolen, Mops!"

"But who could have done it? Those grown-up people wouldn't. You can see from their looks they wouldn't. They're reading aloud. And in the other direction, there are only some fishermen,—they wouldn't take it."

"Well, somebody did. Look, here are lots of footprints, and I don't believe they're all ours."

Sure enough, on the smooth white sand they could see many footprints, imprinted all over each other, as if scurrying feet had trodden all around their precious wood pile.

"Oh, King, you're just like a detective!" cried Marjorie, in admiration. "But it's so! These aren't our footprints!"

She fitted her spring-heeled tan shoes into the prints, and proved at once that they were not hers. Nor did King's shoes fit exactly, though they came nearer to it than Marjorie's.

"Yes, sir; some fellows came along and stole that wood. Here are two or three quite different prints."

"Well, where do they lead to?" said practical Marjorie.

"That's so. Let's trace them and get the wood back."

But after leading away from them for a short distance the footprints became fainter, and in a softer bit of sand disappeared altogether.

"Pshaw!" said King. "I don't so much care about the wood, but I hate to lose the trail like this. Let's hunt, Mopsy."

"All right, but first, let's bury these apples and potatoes, or they'll be stolen, too."

"Good idea!" And they buried their treasures in the nice, clean sand, and marked the place with an inconspicuous stick.

Then they set out to hunt their lost wood. The beach, though flat and shelving at the water's edge, rose in a low bluff farther back, and this offered among its irregular projections many good hiding-places for their quarry.

And, sure enough, after some searching, they came suddenly upon three boys who sat, shaking with laughter, upon a pile of wood.

The two Maynards glared at them rather angrily, upon which the three again went off in peals of laughter.

"That's our wood!" began King, aggressively.

"Sure it is!" returned the biggest boy, still chuckling.

"What did you bring it over here for?"

"Just for fun!"

"H'm, just for fun! And do you think it would be fun to carry it back again?"

"Yep; just's lieve as not. Come on, kids!" And that remarkable boy began to pick up the sticks.

"Oh, hold on," said King. "If you're so willing, you needn't do it! Who are you, anyway?"

"Well," said the biggest boy, suddenly straightening himself up and bowing politely to Marjorie, "we're your neighbors. We live in that green house next to yours. And we're named Tom, Dick, and Harry. Yes, I know you think those names sound funny, but they're ours all the same. Thomas, Richard, and Henry Craig,—at your service! I'm Tom. This is Dick, and this is Harry."

He whacked his brothers on the shoulder as he named them, and they ducked forward in polite, if awkward salutation.

"And did you really take our wood?" said Marjorie, with an accusing glance, as if surprised that such pleasant-spoken boys could do such a thing.

"Yes, we did. We wanted to see what sort of stuff you were made of. You know Seacote people are sort of like one big family, and we wanted to know how you'd behave about the wood. You've been fine, and now we'll cart it back where we found it. If you had got mad about it, we wouldn't touch a stick to take it back,—would we, fellows?"

"Nope," said the other two, and the Maynards could see at once that Tom was the captain and ringleader of the trio.

"Well," said King, judicially, "if you hadn't been the sort you are, I *should* have got mad. But I guess you're all right, and so you

may take it back. But we don't help you do it,—see? I'm Kingdon Maynard, and this is my sister Marjorie. You fellows took our wood, and now you're going to return it. Is that right?"

"Right-o!" said Tom. "Come on, fellows."

The three boys flew at it, and King and Midget sat on the sand and watched them till the wood was restored to its original position.

"All right," said King; "you boys'll do. Now, come on and roast potatoes with us."

Thus, all demands of honor having been complied with, the five proceeded to become friends. The boys built the fire, and gallantly let Marjorie have the fun of putting the potatoes and apples in place.

The Craig boys had nice instincts, and while they were rather rough-and-tumble among themselves, they treated King more decorously, and seemed to consider Marjorie as a being of a higher order, made to receive not only respect, but reverent homage.

"You see, we never had a sister," said Tom; "and we're a little bit scared of girls."

"Well, I have three," said King, "so you see I haven't such deep awe of them. But Midget won't hurt you, so don't be *too* scared of her."

Marjorie smiled in most friendly fashion, for she liked these boys, and especially Tom.

"How old are you?" she asked him, in her frank, pleasant way.

"I'm fourteen," replied Tom, "and the other kids are twelve and ten."

"King's fourteen,—'most fifteen," said Midget; "and I'll be thirteen in July. So we're all in the same years. I wish our Kitty was here. She's nearly eleven, but she isn't any bigger than Harry."

Harry smiled shyly, and poked at the potatoes with a stick, not knowing quite what to say.

"You see," King explained, "Midget is the best sort of a girl there is. She's girly, all right, and yet she's as good as a boy at cutting up jinks or doing any old kind of stunts."

The three Craigs looked at Marjorie in speechless admiration.

"I never knew that kind," said Tom, thoughtfully. "You see, we go to a boys' school, and we haven't any girl cousins, or anything; and the only girls I ever see are at dancing class, or in a summer hotel, and then they're all frilled up, and sort of airy."

"I love to play with boys," said Marjorie, frankly, "and I guess we'll have a lot of fun this summer."

"I guess we *will*! Are you going to stay all summer?"

"Yes, till September, when school begins."

"So are we. Isn't it funny we live next door to each other?"

"Awful funny," agreed Marjorie, pulling a very black potato out of the red-hot embers. "This is done," she went on, "and I'm going to eat it."

"So say we all of us," cried King. "One done,—all done! Help yourselves, boys!"

So they all pulled out the black, sooty potatoes, with more delighted anticipations than would have been roused by the daintiest dish served at a table.

"Ow!" cried Marjorie, flinging down her potato, and sticking her finger in her mouth. "Ow! that old thing *popped* open, and burned me awfully!"

"Too bad, Mops!" said King, with genuine sympathy, but the Craig boys were more solicitous.

"Oh, oh! I'm so sorry," cried Tom. "Does it hurt *terribly*?"

"Yes, it does," said Midget, who was not in the habit of complaining when she got hurt, but who was really suffering from the sudden burn.

"Let me tie it up," said Dick, shyly.

"Yes, do," said Tom. "Dick is our good boy. He always helps everybody else."

"But what can we tie it up with?" said Marjorie. "My handkerchief is all black from wiping off that potato."

"I,—I've got a clean one," and Dick, blushing with embarrassment, took a neatly folded white square from his pocket.

"Would you look at that!" said Tom. "I declare Dicky always has the right thing at the right time! Good for you, boy! Fix her up."

Quite deftly Dick wrapped the handkerchief round Marjorie's finger, and secured it with a bit of string from another pocket.

"You ought to have something on it," he said, gravely.

"Kerosene is good, but as we haven't any, it will help it just to keep the air away from it, till you go home."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Midget. "You talk like a doctor."

"I'm going to be a doctor when I grow up," said Dick.

"He is," volunteered Harry; "he cured the cat's broken leg, and he mended a bird's wing once."

"Yes, I did," admitted Dick, modestly blushing at his achievements. "Are you going right home because of your finger?"

"No, indeed! We never stop for hurts and things, unless they're bad enough for us to go to bed. Give me another potato, and you open it for me, won't you, Dick?"

"Yep," and Marjorie was immediately supplied with the best of the potatoes and apples, carefully prepared for her use.

"Aren't there any other girls in Seacote?" she inquired.

"There's Hester Corey," answered Tom; "but we don't know her very well. She isn't nice, like you are. And I don't know of any others, though there may be some. Most of the people in the cottages haven't any children,—or else they're grown up,—big girls and young ladies. And there's a few little babies, but not many of our age. So that's why we're so glad you came."

"And that's why you stole our wood!"

"Yes, truly. We thought that'd be a good way to test your temper."

"It was a risky way," said King, thinking it over.

"Oh, I don't know. I knew, if you were the right sort, you'd

take it all right; and if you weren't the right sort, we didn't care how you took it."

"That's so," agreed Marjorie.

CHAPTER III
THE SAND CLUB

Life at Seacote soon settled down to its groove, and it was a very pleasant groove. There was always plenty of fun to be had. Bathing every day in the crashing breakers, digging in the sand, building beach fires, talking to the old fishermen, were all delightful pursuits. And then there were long motor rides inland, basket picnics in pine groves, and excursions to nearby watering-places.

The Craig boys turned out to be jolly playfellows, and they and the Maynards became inseparable chums. Marjorie often wished one of them had been a girl, but at the same time, she enjoyed her unique position of being the only girl in the crowd. The boys deferred to her as to a princess, and she ruled them absolutely.

Of course the senior Craigs and Maynards became good friends also, and the two ladies especially spent many pleasant hours together.

Baby Rosamond rarely played with the older children, as she was too little to join in their vigorous games, often original with themselves, and decidedly energetic. The beach was their favorite playground. They never tired of digging in the sand, and they had a multitude of spades and shovels and hoes for their various sand performances. Some days they built a fort, other days a castle or a

pleasure ground. Their sand-works were extensive and elaborate, and it often seemed a pity that the tide or the wind should destroy them over night.

"I say, let's us be a Sand Club," said Tom one day. "We're always playing in the sand, you know."

"All right," said Marjorie, instantly seeing delightful possibilities. "We'll call ourselves Sand Crabs, for we're always scrambling through the sand."

"And we're jolly as sandboys!" said King. "I don't know what sandboys really are, but they're always jolly, and so are we."

"I'd like something more gay and festive," Marjorie put in; "I mean like Court Life, or something where we could dress up, and pretend things."

"I know what you mean," said Dick, grasping her idea. "Let's have Sand Court, and build a court and a throne, and we'll all be royal people and Marjorie can be queen."

"Well, let's all have sandy names," suggested Tom. "Marjorie can be Queen Sandy. And we'll call our court Sandringham Palace. You know there is one, really."

"You can be the Grand Sandjandrum!" said King, laughing.

"No, you be that," said Tom, unselfishly.

"No, sir; *you've* got to. I'll be a sand piper, and play the court anthems."

"All right," said Marjorie, "and Harry can be a sand crab, for he just scuttles through the sand all the time. What'll Dick be?"

King looked at Dick. "We'll call him Sandow," he suggested,

and they all laughed, for Dick was a frail little chap, without much muscular strength. But the name stuck to him, and they always called him Sandow thereafter.

"I wish we could make our palace where it would stay made," said Marjorie. "We don't want to make a new one every day."

"That's so," said Tom. "If we only could find a secret haunt."

"I know a kind of a one," said Dick; "'way back in our yard, near where it joins yours, is a deepy kind of a place, and it's quite sandy."

"Just the thing!" cried Marjorie. "I know that place. Come on!"

She was off like a deer, and the rest followed. A few moments' scamper brought them to the place, and all declared it was just the very spot for a palace.

"I'd like beach sand better, though," said Marjorie.

"We'll bring all you want," declared Tom. "We'll take a wheelbarrow, and bring heaps up from the beach."

The Sand Club worked for days getting their palace in order. The two big boys wheeled many loads of sand up from the beach, and Marjorie and the two other boys arranged it in shape.

Dick was clever at building, and he planned a number of fine effects. Of course, their palace had no roof or walls, but the apartments were partitioned off with low walls of sand, and there were sand sofas and chairs, and a gorgeous throne.

The throne was a heap of sand, surmounted by a legless armchair, found in the Craigs' attic, and at court meetings draped

with pink cheesecloth and garlands of flowers. The whole palace was really a "secret haunt," for a slight rise of ground screened it from view on two sides and trees shaded the other side.

The parents of both families were pleased with the whole scheme, for it kept the children occupied, and they could always be found at a moment's notice.

Sand tables were built, and on them were bits of old dishes and broken vases, all of which were desirable because they could stay out in the rain and not be harmed. Moreover, they were handy in case of a feast. At last preparations were complete and they decided to open the court next day.

"We must have a flag," said Marjorie. "I'll make it. The court colors are red and yellow, and our emblem will be,—what shall our emblem be?"

"A pail of sand," suggested Tom.

"Yes; I can cut out a pail of red flannel, and sew it on to a yellow flag. I'll make that this afternoon, and we'll hold court to-morrow morning at ten o'clock. We must all wear some red and yellow. Sashes will do for you boys, and I'll have,—well, I'll fix up a rig of some kind."

Marjorie was a diligent little worker when she chose to be, and that afternoon she made a very creditable flag, showing a pail, red; on a field, yellow. She made also sashes for them all, of red and yellow cheesecloth, and she made herself a court train of the same material, which trailed grandly from her shoulders.

Next morning the Sand Club assembled on the Maynards'

veranda, to march to Sandringham Palace.

Mrs. Craig had helped out the costumes of her royal children, and the Grand Sandjandrum was gorgeous in a voluminous yellow turban, with a red cockade sticking up on one side.

Sandow and the Sand Crab had soldier hats made of red and yellow paper, and big sailor collars of the same colors.

The Sand Piper wore his sash jauntily with a huge shoulder knot, and he, too, had a cockaded headgear.

Marjorie, as Queen Sandy, wore her trailing court robe and a crown of yellow paper with red stars on it. She had a sceptre, and Sandow carried the flag.

The Sand Piper marched ahead, playing on a tuneful instrument known as a kazoo. Next came the Grand Sandjandrum, then the Queen, then the Sand Crab, and finally, Sandow with the flag.

Slowly and with great dignity the procession filed out toward the palace. King was playing the Star Spangled Banner, or thought he was. It sounded almost as much like Hail Columbia, —but it didn't really matter, and they're both difficult tunes, anyway.

Blithely they stepped along, and prepared to enter the palace with a flourish of trumpets, as it were, when King's music stopped suddenly.

"Great Golliwogs!" he cried. "Look at that!"

"Look at what?" said Tom, who was absorbed in the grand march.

But he looked, and they all looked, and five angry exclamations sounded as they saw only the ruins of the beloved Sandringham Palace.

Somebody had utterly demolished it. The low walls were broken and scattered, the sand tables and chairs were torn down, and the throne was entirely upset.

"Who did this?" roared Tom.

But as nobody knew the answer, there was no reply.

"It couldn't have been any of your servants, could it?" asked King of the Craigs. "I know it wasn't any of ours."

"No; it wasn't ours, either," said Tom. "Could it have been your little sister?"

"Mercy, no!" cried Marjorie. "Rosy Posy isn't that sort of a child. Oh, I do think it's awful!" and forgetting her royal dignity, Queen Sandy began to cry.

"Why, Mops," said King, kindly; "brace up, old girl. Don't cry."

"I'm not a cry baby," said Midget, smiling through her tears. "I'm just crying 'cause I'm so *mad*! I'm mad clear through! How *could* anybody be so ugly?"

"I'm mad, too," declared Tom, slowly, "but I know who did it, and it's partly my fault, I s'pose."

"Your fault!" exclaimed Midget. "Why, Tom, how can it be?"

"Well, you see it was this way. Yesterday afternoon Mrs. Corey came to call on my mother, and she brought Hester with her."

"That red-headed girl?"

"Yes; and she has a temper to match her hair! Mother made me talk to her, and, as I didn't know what else to talk about, I told her about our Sand Club, and about the Court to-day and everything. And she wanted to belong to the club, and I told her she couldn't, because it was just the Maynards and the Craigs. And she was madder'n hops, and she coaxed me, and I still said no, and then she said she'd get even with us somehow."

"But, Tom," said King, "we don't know that girl to speak to. We hardly know her by sight."

"But we do. We knew her when we were here last summer, but, you see, this year we've had you two to play with, so we've sort of neglected her,—and she doesn't like it."

"But that's no reason she should spoil our palace," and Marjorie looked sadly at the scene of ruin and destruction.

"No; and of course I'm not sure that she did do it. But she said she'd do something to get even with you."

"With me? Why, she doesn't know me at all."

"That's what she's mad about. She says you're stuck up, and you put on airs and never look at her."

"Why, how silly! I don't know her, but somehow, from her looks, I *know* I shouldn't like her."

"No, you wouldn't, Marjorie. She's selfish, and she's ill-tempered. She flies into a rage at any little thing, and,—well, she isn't a bit like you Maynards."

"*No!* and I'm glad of it! I wouldn't *want* to be like such a stuck-

up thing!"

These last words were spoken by a strange voice, and Marjorie looked round quickly to see a shock of red hair surmounting a very angry little face just appearing from behind the small hill, beneath whose overhanging shadow they had built their palace.

"Why, Hester Corey!" shouted Tom. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to see how you like your old sand-house!" she jeered, mockingly, and making faces at Marjorie between her words. Marjorie was utterly astonished. It was her first experience with a child of this type, and she didn't know just how to take her.

The newcomer was a little termagant. Her big blue eyes seemed to flash with anger, and as she danced about, shaking her fist at Marjorie and pointing her forefinger at her, she cried, tauntingly, "Stuck up! Proudy!"

Marjorie grew indignant. She had done nothing knowingly to provoke this wrath, so she faced the visitor squarely, and glared back at her.

"I'd rather be stuck up than to be such a spiteful thing as you are!" she declared. "Did *you* tear down this palace that we took such trouble to build?"

"Yes, I did!" said Hester. "And if you build it again, I'll tear it down again,—so, there, now!"

"You'll do no such thing!" shouted Tom.

"Huh, Smarty! What have you got to say about it?"

The crazy little Hester flew at Tom and pounded him

vigorously on the back.

"I hate you!" she cried. "I *hate* you!"

As a matter of fact, her little fists couldn't hurt the big, sturdy boy, but her intense anger made him angry too.

"You, Hester Corey!" he cried. "You leave me alone!"

King stood a little apart, with his hands in his pockets, looking at the combatants.

"Say, we've had about enough of this," he said, speaking quietly, and without excitement. "We Maynards are not accustomed to this sort of thing. We squabble sometimes, but we never get really angry."

"Goody-goody boy!" said Hester, sneeringly, and making one of her worst faces at him. For some reason this performance struck King as funny.

"Do it again," he said. "How do you ever squink up your nose like that! Bet you can't do it three times in succession."

The audacious Hester tried it, and the result was so ludicrous they all laughed.

"Now look here," went on King, "we're not acquainted with you, but we know you're Hester Corey. We know you spoiled our Sand Palace, just out of angry spite. Now, Hester Corey, you've got to be punished for that. We're peaceable people ourselves, but we're just, also. We were about to have a nice celebration, but you've put an end to that before it began. So, instead, we're going to have a trial. You're the prisoner, and you've pleaded guilty, —at least, you've confessed your crime. Queen Sandy, get into

that throne,—never mind if it is upset,—set it up again. Grand Sandjandrum, take your place on that mussed up sand heap. You two other chaps,—stand one each side of the prisoner as sentinels. I'll conduct this case, and Queen Sandy will pronounce the sentence. It's us Maynards that Hester Corey seems to have a grudge against, so it's up to us Maynards to take charge of the case. Prisoner, stand on that board there."

"I won't do it!" snapped Hester, and the red locks shook vigorously.

"You will do it," said King, quietly, and for some reason or other Hester quailed before his glance, and then meekly stood where he told her to.

"Have you anything to say for yourself?" King went on. "Any excuse to offer for such a mean, hateful piece of work?"

Hester sulked a minute, then she said:

"Yes, I was mad at you, because you all have such good times, and wouldn't let me in them."

"What do you mean by that? You never asked to come in."

"I did. I asked Tom Craig yesterday, and he wouldn't ask you."

"Then why are you mad at us?"

"Because you're so proud and exclusive. You think yourselves so great; you think nobody's as good as you are!"

"That isn't true, Hester," said King, quite gently; "and even if it were, are you proving yourself better than we are by cutting up this mean, babyish trick? If you want us to like you, why not make yourself likeable, instead of horrid and hateful?"

This was a new idea to Hester, and she stared at King as if greatly interested.

"That's right," he went on. "If people want people to like them, they must be likeable. They must be obliging and kind and pleasant, and not small and spiteful."

"You haven't been very nice to me," muttered Hester.

"We haven't had a chance. And before we get a chance you upset everything by making us dislike you! What kind of common sense is that?"

"Maybe you could forgive me," suggested Hester, hopefully.

"Maybe we could, later on. But we're for fair play, and you treated us unfairly. So now, you've got to be punished. Queen Sandy, Grand Sandjandrum, which of you can suggest proper punishment for this prisoner of ours?"

Tom thought for a moment, then he said:

"Seems 's if she ought to put this palace back in order, just as it was when she found it,—but that's too hard work for a girl."

"I'll help her," said Harry, earnestly. "I'm sorry for her."

"Sorry for her!" cried Tom, with blazing eyes. "*Sorry* for the girl that spoiled our palace!"

"Well, you see," went on Harry, "she's sorry herself now."

CHAPTER IV
SAND COURT

With one accord, they all looked at Hester. Sure enough, it was easily to be seen that she was sorry. All her anger and rage had vanished, and she stood digging one toe into the sand, and twisting from side to side, with her eyes cast down, and two big tears rolling slowly down her cheeks.

Marjorie sprang up from her wabbly throne, and running to Hester, threw her arms around her.

"Don't cry, Hester," she said. "We'll all forgive you. I think you lost your temper and I think you're sorry now, aren't you?"

"Oh, yes, yes, I am!" sobbed Hester. "But I envied the good times you had, and when Tom wouldn't let me into your club, I got so mad I didn't know what to do."

"There, there, don't cry any more," and Midget smoothed the tangled red mop, and tried to comfort the bad little Hester.

Tom looked rather disappointed.

"I say," he began, "she did an awful mean thing, and she ought to be–"

"Hold on a minute, Tom," said Marjorie. "I'm Queen of this club, and what I say goes! Is that right, my courtiers?"

She looked round at the boys, smiling in a wheedlesome way, and King said, "Right, O Queen Sandy! Right always and ever,

in the hearts of your gentlemen-in-waiting."

"You bet you are!" cried Tom, quick to follow King's lead. "Our noble Queen has but to say the word, and it is our law. Therefore, O Queen, we beg thee to mete out a just punishment to this prisoner within our gates."

"Hear ye! Hear ye!" said Midget, with great dramatic fervor. "I hereby forgive this prisoner of ours, because she's truly sorry she acted like the dickens. And as a punishment, I condemn her to rebuild this royal palace, but, following Harry's example, we will all help her with the work."

Then King burst forth into song:

"Hooray, Hooray, for our noble Queen,
The very best monarch that ever was seen.
There's nobody quite so perfectly dandy,
As our most gracious, most noble Queen Sandy!"

They all repeated this chorus, and the Queen bowed and smiled at her devoted court.

"And also," her Royal Highness went on, "we hereby take into our club Miss Hester Corey as a new member. I'm glad to have another girl in it,—and what I say goes!"

This time Tom made up the song:

"What she says, goes!
She's sweet as a rose,
From head to toes,

So what she says, goes!"

"Miss Hester Corey is now a member," said Midget, "and her name is,—is–"

"Sand Witch," suggested Tom.

"Yes," said King; "you expect witches to cut up tricks."

"All right," said Hester. "Call me Sand Witch, and you'll see there are good witches as well as bad."

"Come on, then," said Marjorie, "and show us how you can work. Let's put this palace back into shape again as quick as scat!"

They all fell to work, and it didn't take so very long after all. Hester was conquered by the power of Marjorie's kindness, and she was meek as a lamb. She did whatever she was told, and was a quick and willing worker.

"Now," said Midget, after it was all in order once more, "now we'll have our celebration. You see, we have six in our court now, instead of five, and I think it's nicer. I'll give the Sand Witch my sash to wear, and she can be my first lady-in-waiting."

This position greatly pleased Hester, and she took her place at the side of the enthroned Queen, while Tom stood at her other side. King played a grand tune, and they all sang.

The song was in honor of the flag-raising, and was hastily composed by Marjorie for the occasion:

"Our Flag, our Flag, our Sand Club Flag!
Long may she wave, long may she wag!

And may our Sand Club ever stand
A glory to our Native Land."

Tom persisted in singing "a glory to our native *sand*," and King said *strand*, but after all, it didn't matter.

Then Sandow, bearing the flag, stepped gravely forward, and the boys all helped to plant it firmly in the middle of Sand Court, while the Queen and her lady-in-waiting nodded approval.

"Ha, Courtiers! I prithee sit!" the Queen commanded, when the flag was gaily waving in the breeze.

Her four courtiers promptly sat on the ground at her feet, and the Queen addressed them thus:

"Gentlemen-in-waiting of Sandringham Palace, there are much affairs of state now before us. First must we form our club, our Sand Club."

"Most noble Queen," and Tom rose to his feet, "have I your permission to speak?"

"Speak!" said the Queen, graciously, waving her sceptre at him.

"Then I rise to inquire if this is a secret organization."

"You bet it is!" cried King, jumping up. "The very secretest ever! If any one lets out the secrets of these secret meetings, he shall be excommunicated in both feet!"

"A just penalty!" said Tom, gravely.

"Is all well, O fair Queen? Do you agree?"

"Yes, I agree," said the Queen, smiling. "But I want to know

what these secrets are to be about."

"That's future business," declared King. "Just now we have to elect officers, and all that."

"All right," said Marjorie, "but you must be more courtly about it. Say it more,—you know how I mean."

"As thus," spoke up the lady-in-waiting, dropping on one knee before the Queen.

"What is the gracious will of your Royal Highness in the matter of secretary and treasurer, O Queen!"

"Yes, that's better. Well, my court, to tell you the truth, I don't think that we need a secretary and such things, because it isn't a regular club. Let us content ourselves with our present noble offices. Grand Sandjandrum, what are the duties of thy high office?"

"No duties, but all pleasures, when serving thee, O noble and gracious Queen!"

"That's fine," said Midget, clapping her hands. "Hither, Sir Sand Piper! What are thy duties at, court?"

"Your Majesty," said King, bowing low, "it is my humble part to play the pipes, or to lay the pipes, as the case may be. I do not smoke pipes, but, if it be thy gracious wish, I can blow fair soap bubbles from them."

"Sand Piper, I see you know your business," said the Queen. "Ha! Sand Crab, what dost thou do each day?"

"Just scramble around in the sand," replied Harry, and suiting the action to the word, he gave such a funny scrambling

performance that they all applauded.

"Right well done, noble Sand Crab," commented the smiling Queen. "And thou, O Sandow?"

"I do all the strong-arm work required in the palace," said Dick, doubling up his little fist, and trying to make it look large and powerful.

"Now, thee, my fair lady-in-waiting, what dost thou do in this, my court?"

Hester shook back her mop of red curls, and her eyes danced as she answered, gaily:

"I am the Court Sand Witch! I cut up tricks of all sorts, as doth become a witch. Aye, many a time will I cause enchantments to fall upon thee, one and all! I am a magic witch, and I can cast spells!"

Hester waved her arms about, and swayed from side to side, her eyes fixed in a glassy stare, and her red curls bobbing.

"Good gracious!" cried Marjorie. "You're like a witch I saw on the stage once in a fairy pantomime. Say, Hester, let's have a pantomime entertainment some day."

"All right. My mother'll help us. She's always getting up private theatricals and things like that. She says I inherit her dramatic talent."

"All right," said Tom, warningly; "but don't you turn your dramatic talent toward tearing down our palace again."

"Of course I won't, now I'm a member."

"Of course she won't," agreed Marjorie. "Now, my courtiers,

and lady-in-waiting, there's another subject to come before your royal attention. We must have a Court Journal."

"What's that?" inquired Harry.

"Why, a sort of a paper, you know, with all the court news in it."

"There isn't any."

"But there will be. We're not fairly started yet. Now who'll write this paper?"

"All of us," suggested Tom.

"Yes; but there must be one at the head of it,—sort of editor, you know."

"Guess it better be King," said Tom, thoughtfully. "He knows the most about writing things."

"All right," agreed King. "I'll edit the paper, only you must all contribute. We'll have it once a week, and everybody must send me some contribution, if it's only a little poem or something."

"I can't write poems," said Harry, earnestly, "but I can gather up news,—and like that."

"Yes," said Marjorie, "that's what I mean. But it must be news about us court people, or maybe our families."

"Can't we make it up?" asked Hester.

"Yes, I s'pose so, if you make it real court like and grand sounding."

"What shall we call our paper?" asked King.

"Oh, just the *Court Journal*," replied Midget.

"I don't think so," objected Hester. "I think it ought to have a

name like *The Sand Club*."

"*The Jolly Sandboy*," exclaimed Tom. "How's that?"

"But two of us are girls!" said Marjorie.

"That doesn't matter, it's just the name of the paper, you know. And it sounds so gay and jolly."

"I like it," declared King, and so they all agreed to the name.

"Now, my courtiers and noble friends," said their Queen, "it's time we all scooted home to luncheon. My queen-dowager mother likes me to be on time for meals. Also, my majesty and my royal sand piper can't come back to play this afternoon. But shall this court meet to-morrow morning?"

"You bet, your Majesty!" exclaimed Tom, with fervor.

"That isn't very courtly language, my Grand Sandjandrum."

"I humbly beg your Majesty's pardon, and I prostrate myself in humble humility!" And Tom sprawled on his face at Marjorie's feet.

"Rise, Sir Knight," said the gracious Queen, and then the court dispersed toward its various homes.

"Well, we had the greatest time this morning you ever heard of!" announced Marjorie as, divested of her royal trappings and clad in a fresh pink gingham, she sat at the luncheon table.

"What was it all about, Moppets?" asked Mrs. Maynard.

So King and Marjorie together told all about the intrusion of Hester on their celebration, and how they had finally taken her into the Sand Club as a member.

"I think my children behaved very well," said Mrs. Maynard,

looking at the two with pride.

"I did get sort of mad at first, Mother," Marjorie confessed, not wanting more praise than was her just due.

"Well, I don't blame you!" declared King. "Why, that girl made most awful faces at Mops, and talked to her just horrid! If she hadn't calmed down afterward we couldn't have played with her at all."

"I've heard about that child," said Mrs. Maynard. "She has most awful fits of temper, I'm told. Mrs. Craig says that Hester will be as good and as sweet as a lamb for days,—and then she'll fly into a rage over some little thing. I'm glad you children are not like that."

"I'm glad, too," said King. "We're not angels, but if we acted up like Hester did at first we couldn't live in the house with each other!"

"Her mother is an actress," observed Marjorie.

"Oh, no, Midget, you're mistaken," said her mother. "I know Mrs. Corey, and she isn't an actress at all, and never was. But she is fond of amateur theatricals, and she is president of a club that gives little plays now and then."

"Yes, that's it," said King. "Hester said her mother had dramatic talent, and she had inherited it. Have you dramatic talent, Mother?"

"I don't know, King," said Mrs. Maynard, laughing. "Your father and I have joined their dramatic club, but it remains to be seen whether we can make a success of it."

"Oh, Mother!" cried Marjorie. "Are you really going to act in a play? Oh, can we see you?"

"I don't know yet, Midget. Probably it will be an entertainment only for grown-ups. We've just begun rehearsals."

"Have we dramatic talent, Mother?"

"Not to any astonishing degree. But, yes, I suppose your fondness for playing at court life and such things shows a dramatic taste."

"Oh, it's great fun, Mother! I just love to sit on that throne with my long trail wopsed on the floor beside me, and my sceptre sticking up, and my courtiers all around me,—oh, Mother, I think I'd like to be a real queen!"

"Well, you see, Midget, you were born in a country that doesn't employ queens."

"And I'm glad of it!" cried Marjorie, patriotically. "Hooray! for the land of the free and the home of the brave! I guess I don't care to be a real queen, I guess I'll be a president's wife instead. Say, Mother, won't you and Father write us some poems for *The Jolly Sandboy*?"

"What is that, Midget?"

"Oh, it's our court journal,—and you and Father do write such lovely poetry. Will you, Mother?"

"Yes, I 'spect so."

"Oh, goody! When you say 'I 'spect so,' you always *do*. Hey, King, Rosy Posy ought to have a sandy kind of a name, even if she doesn't come to our court meetings."

"'Course she ought. And she can come sometimes, if she doesn't upset things."

"She can't upset things worse'n Hester did."

"No; but I don't believe Hester will act up like that again."

"She may, Marjorie," said Mrs. Maynard. "I've heard her mother say she can't seem to curb Hester's habit of flying into a temper. So just here, my two loved ones, let me ask you to be kind to the little girl, and if she gets angry, don't flare back at her, but try 'a soft answer.'"

"But, Mother," said King, "that isn't so awful easy! And, anyway, I don't think she ought to do horrid things,—like tumbling down our palace,—and then we just forgive her, and take her into the club!"

"Why not, King?"

King looked a little nonplussed.

"Why," he said, "why,—because it doesn't seem fair."

"And does it seem fairer for you to lose your temper too, and try what children call 'getting even with her'?"

"Well, Mother, it *does* seem fairer, but I guess it isn't very,—very *noble*."

"No, son, it isn't. And I hope you'll come to think that sometimes nobility of action is better than mere justice."

"I see what you mean, Mother, and somehow, talking here with you, it all seems true enough. But when we get away from you, and off with the boys and girls, these things seem different. Were you always noble when you were little, Mother?"

"No, Kingdon dear, I wasn't always. But my mother tried her best to teach me to be,—so don't you think I ought to try to teach you?"

"Sure, Mothery! And you bet we'll do our bestest to try to learn. Hey, Mops?"

"Yes, indeedy! I *want* to do things right, but I seem to forget just when I ought to remember."

"Well, when you forget, come home and tell Mother all about it, and we'll take a fresh start. You're pretty fairly, tolerably, moderately good children after all! Only I want you to grow a little speck better each day."

"And we *will*!" shouted King and Marjorie together.

CHAPTER V
"THE JOLLY SANDBOY"

The Sand Club was not very strict in its methods or systems. Some days it met, and some days it didn't. Sometimes all the court was present, and sometimes only three or four of them.

But everything went on harmoniously, and there were no exhibitions of ill temper from the Sand Witch.

In fact, Hester was absorbed in doing her part toward the first number of *The Jolly Sandboy*.

The child was quite an adept at drawing and painting, and she was making several illustrations for their court journal. One, representing Marjorie seated on her sand throne, was really clever, and there were other smaller pictures, too.

Kingdon worked earnestly to get the paper into shape. He had contributions from all the club, and from Mr. and Mrs. Maynard also. He had a small typewriter of his own, and he laboriously copied the contributions on fair, white pages, and, with Hester's pictures interspersed, bound them all into a neat cover of red paper.

This Hester ornamented with a yellow sand-pail, emblem of their club, and tied it at the top with a yellow ribbon. Altogether, the first number of *The Jolly Sandboy* was a strikingly beautiful affair.

And the court convened, in full court dress, to hear it read.

The court wardrobes had received various additions. Often a courtier blossomed out in some new regalia, always of red or yellow, or both.

The several mothers of the court frequently donated old ribbons, feathers, or flowers, from discarded millinery or other finery, and all these were utilized by the frippery loving courtiers.

Hester had contrived a witch costume, which was greatly admired. A red skirt, a yellow shawl folded cornerwise, and a very tall peaked hat of black with red and yellow ribbons, made the child look like some weird creature.

Marjorie's tastes ran rather to magnificent attire, and she accumulated waving plumes, artificial flowers, and floating gauze veils and draperies.

The boys wore nondescript costumes, in which red jerseys and yellow sashes played a prominent part, while King achieved the dignity of a mantle, picturesquely slung from one shoulder. Many badges and orders adorned their breasts, and lances and spears, wound with gilt paper, added to the courtly effect.

"My dearly beloved Court," Marjorie began, beaming graciously from her flower decked throne, "we are gathered together here to-day to listen to the reading of our Court Journal, —a noble paper,—published by our noble courtier, the Sand Piper, who will now read it to us."

"Hear! Hear!" cried all the courtiers.

"Most liege Majesty," began King, bowing so low that his

shoulder cape fell off. But he hastily swung it back into place and went on. "Also, most liege lady-in-waiting, our noble Sand Witch, we greet thee. And we greet our Grand Sandjandrum, and our noble Sandow, and our beloved Sand Crab. We greet all, and everybody. Did I leave anybody out of this greeting?"

"No! No!"

"All right; then I'll fire away. The first article in this paper is an editorial,—I wrote it myself because I am editor-in-chief. You're all editors, you know, but I'm the head editor."

"Why not say headitor?" suggested Tom.

"Good idea, friend Courtier! I'm the headitor, then. And this is my headitorial. Here goes! 'Courtiers and Citizens: This journal, called *The Jolly Sandboy*, shall relate from time to time the doings of our noble court. It shall tell of the doughty deeds of our brave knights, and relate the gay doings of our fair ladies. It shall mention news of interest, if any, concerning the inhabitants of Seacote in general, and the families of this court in particular. Our politics are not confined to any especial party, but our platform is to grow up to be presidents ourselves.' This ends my headitorial."

Great applause followed this masterpiece of journalistic literature, and the Sand Piper proceeded:

"I will next read the column of news, notes, and social events, as collected by our energetic and capable young reporter, the Sand Crab:

"'The Queen and her lady-in-waiting went bathing in the

ocean this morning. Our noble Queen was costumed in white, trimmed with blue, and the Sand Witch in dark blue trimmed with red. Both noble ladies squealed when a large breaker knocked them over. The whole court rushed to their rescue, and no permanent damage resulted.

"Three gentlemen courtiers of this court, who reside in the same castle, had ice-cream for dinner last night. The colors were pink and white. It was exceeding good.

"A very young princess, a sister of our beloved Queen, went walking yesterday afternoon with her maid of honor. The princess wore a big white hat with funny ribbon bunches on it. Also white shoes.

"Mr. Sears has had his back fence painted. (We don't know any Mr. Sears, and he hasn't any back fence, but we are making up now, as our real news has given out and our column isn't full.)

"Mrs. Black spent Sunday with her mother-in-law, Mrs. Green. (See above.)

"Mr. Van Winkle is building a gray stone mansion of forty rooms on Seashore Drive. We think it is quite a pretty house.

"This is all the news I can find for this time. Yours truly.—The Sand Crab.'"

"Noble Sand Crab, we thank you for your fine contribution to our midst," announced the Queen, and the Sand Crab burrowed in the sand and kicked in sheer delight at such praise.

"The next," announced the Sand Piper, "is an original poem by our most liege majesty, the Queen. It's pretty fine, I think.

"Most noble Court, I greet you now,
From Grand Sandjandrum to small Sandow.
From old Sand Piper, and gay Sand Witch,
To Sand Crab, with hair as black as pitch.
I hope our Court will ever be
Renowned for its fun and harmony.
And as I gaze on this gorgeous scene,
I'm glad I am your beloved Queen."

"Jinks! that's gay!" exclaimed Tom. "How do you ever do it, Marjorie? I did a poem, but it doesn't run nice and slick like yours."

"I'll read it next," said King. "I think it's pretty good.

"I love the people named *Maynard*,
I like to play in their back yard.
We have a jolly Sand Court,
Which makes the time fly very short.
Except going in the ocean bathing,
There's nothing I like so much for a plaything."

"That's very nice, Tom," said Marjorie, forgetting her rôle.

"No, it isn't. It seems as if it ought to be right, and then somehow it isn't. Bathing and plaything are 'most alike, and yet they sound awful different."

"That's so. Well, anyway, it's plenty good enough, and it's all true, Tom."

"Yes, it's all true."

"Then it must be right, 'cause there's a quotation or something that says truth is beauty. We wouldn't want all our poems to be just alike, you know."

"No, I s'pose not," and Tom felt greatly encouraged by Marjorie's kind criticism.

"Next," said King, "is our Puzzle Department. It's sort of queer, but it's Sandow's contribution, and he said to put it in, and he'd explain about it. So here it is.

"'Sandy Prize Puzzle. Prize, a musical top, donated by the author. Question: Is the number of sands on the seashore odd or even? Anybody in this court who can answer this question truthfully will receive the prize. Signed, Sandow.'"

"That's nonsense," cried Hester. "How can anybody tell whether we answer truthfully or not?"

"I can tell," said Sandow, gravely. "Whoever first answers it truthfully will get the prize."

"But it's ridiculous," said King. "In the first place, how much seashore do you mean? Only that here at Seacote, or all the Atlantic shore? Or all the world?"

Dick considered. "I mean all the seashore in all the world," he said, at last.

"Then that's silly, too," said Tom, "for how far does the seashore go? Just to the edge of the ocean, or all the way under?"

"All the way under," replied Dick, solemnly.

"Then you really mean all the sand in all the world!"

"Yes; that's it. Of course, all the sand in all the world numbers a certain number of grains. Now, is that number odd or even?"

"You're crazy, Dick!" said Hester, but Marjorie said, "No, he isn't crazy; I think there's a principle there somewhere, but I can't work it out."

"I guess you can't!" said King. "I give it up."

"So do I!" declared Tom, and at last they all gave it up.

"Now you must answer it yourself, Dick," said King.

"Then nobody gets the prize," objected Sandow.

"No, you keep it yourself. Have you got one, anyhow?"

"Yes, a nice musical top Uncle John sent to me. I've never used it much, it's as good as new. I *wish* somebody would guess."

Nobody did, and Dick sighed.

"Bet you can't answer your old puzzle, yourself," said Hester.

"Yes, I can," averred Dick, "but you must ask it to me."

"All right," said King. "Mr. Sandow, honorable and noble courtier of Sand Court, is the number of sea sands odd or even? Answer truthfully now."

"I don't know," replied Dick, "and that's the truth!"

How they all laughed! It was a quibble, of course, but the Maynard children were surprised at themselves that they hadn't seen through the catch.

Dick sat on the sand, rocking back and forth with laughter.

"The witch ought to have guessed it," he cried; "or else the Queen ought to."

"Yes, my courtier, we ought," Marjorie admitted. "You caught

us fairly, and we hereby give you the post of wizard of this court. Sand Piper, what's next in your journal?"

"The next is a poem by the Honorable Edward Maynard. That is, he wrote part of it, and then, as he had to go to New York on business, his honorable wife finished it. Here it is:

"Royal Courtiers, great and grand,
Ruling o'er your court of sand,
Take this greeting from the pen
Of an humble citizen.
May you, each one, learn to be
Filled with true nobility;
Gentle, loving, brave, and kind,
Strong of arm and pure of mind.
May you have a lot of fun,
And look back, when day is done,
O'er long hours of merry play
Filled with laughter blithe and gay.
May your court of mimic rule
Teach you lore not learned in school;
Rule your heart to think no ill,
Rule your temper and your will."

"Gee, that's real poetry, that is!" exclaimed Tom. "Say, your people are poets, aren't they?"

"Why, I think they are," said Marjorie, "but Father says they're not."

"I'd like a copy of that poem," said Hester, looking very

serious.

"All right," said King, catching the witch's glance. "I'll make you a nice typewritten copy of it to-morrow."

"And now, my royal Sand Piper, is there any more poetic lore for us to listen to?"

"Aye, my liege Queen, there is one more poem. This is a real poem also, but it is of the humorous variety. It was composed by the mother of our royal Sand Witch, and was freely contributed to our paper by that estimable lady. Methinks she mistook our club for a debating club, and yet, perhaps not. This may be merely a flight of fancy, such as poets are very fond of, I am told. I will now read Mrs. Corey's contribution:

> "There once was a Debating Club, exceeding wise and great;
> On grave and abstruse questions it would eagerly debate.
> Its members said: 'We are so wise, ourselves we'll herewith dub
> The Great Aristophelean Pythagoristic Club.'
> And every night these bigwigs met, and strove with utmost pains
> To solve recondite problems that would baffle lesser brains.
> They argued and debated till the hours were small and wee;
> And weren't much discouraged if they didn't then agree.
> They said their say, and went their way, these cheerful, pleasant men,
> And then came round next evening, and said it all again.
> Well, possibly, you'll be surprised; but all the winter through
> The questions they debated on numbered exactly two.

For as they said: 'Of course we can't take up another one,
Till we have solved conclusively the two that we've begun.'
They reasoned and they argued, as the evenings wore along;
And each one thought that he was right, and deemed the others wrong.
They wrangled and contended, they disputed and discussed,
They retorted and rebutted, they refuted and they fussed;
But though their wisdom was profound, and erudite their speech,
A definite conclusion those men could never reach.
And so the club disbanded, and they read their last report,
Which told the whole sad story, though it was exceeding short:
'Resolved—We are not able to solve these problems two:
"Does Polly want a cracker?" and "What did Katy do?"'"

"Well, isn't that fine!" cried Marjorie. "Why, Hester, your mother is more a poet than ours."

"She does write lovely poetry," said Hester, "but I like your mother's poem, too, because it,—well, you know what I mean."

Somehow the children all understood that tempestuous Hester appreciated the lines that so gently advised the ruling and subduing of an unruly temper and will, but nobody knew just how to express it.

So King broke a somewhat awkward silence by saying, heartily, "Yep, we know!" and all the others said "Yep" in chorus.

"I think, O Royal Court," the Queen began, "that our first paper is fine. How often shall we issue *The Jolly Sandboy*?"

"'Bout once a week, I think," said Tom.

"All right," agreed King; "and you fellows get your stuff in a little earlier next week so's I can typewrite it in time."

"And now, my beloved court," resumed Midget, "I think we have sat still long enough, and I decree that we have a game of Prisoner's Base. And what I say goes!"

There was no dissenting voice. The Queen unpinned her court train from her shoulders, the Sand Witch laid aside her tall, peaked hat, and the courtiers discarded such details of their costumes as seemed likely to impede progress in the game. Prisoner's Base was followed by Hide and Seek, and then it was time for the court to repair to its several homes.

"It's all so lovely, Marjorie," said Hester. "I'm *so* glad you let me play with you."

"That's all right, Hester, as long as you don't smash things or make faces at us."

"Oh, I never will again; truly, Marjorie. I'm going to learn that poem of your mother's by heart, and I *know* I'll never lose my temper again, Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Hester," and after an affectionate kiss the two girls parted.

"Goo'-bye, Queenie Sandy," called Tom, as they separated at the turn of the path.

"Good-bye, Tom, you old Grand Sandjandrum!" and then the Maynards ran into their own house.

"Gently, my lad and lassie; gently!" warned Mrs. Maynard, as

her two young hopefuls flung themselves upon her.

"Oh, Mothery," cried Marjorie, "we had *such* a good time! And our court journal was lovely! Want to see it? And King fixed it up so beautifully, and Hester made such *dear* pictures for it! Oh, Mother, isn't it splendid to have so much fun?"

"Yes, dearie," and Mrs. Maynard stroked the flushed brow of her energetic and excitable daughter. "But when you come in from your play, you must be a little bit quieter and more ladylike. I don't want to think that these merry companions of yours are making you really boisterous."

"They are, though," said King. "I like the Craigs and Hester Corey, but they sure are the noisy bunch!"

"Oh, King, not *quite* so much slang!"

"No, Mother, we won't get gay! We'll try to please you every way! But we're feeling rather spry to-day! So please excuse us, Mothery May!"

CHAPTER VI
TWO WELCOME GUESTS

It was Saturday afternoon. The Maynard children had been told that guests were expected to dinner, and they must put on festival array.

And so when King and Marjorie, in white serge and white piqué respectively, wandered out on to the front veranda, they found their parents and a very dressy-looking Rosamond there before them.

"Who are coming to dinner, Mother?" asked Midget.

"Ask your father, my dear."

"Why, don't *you* know, Mother? Well, who are they, Daddy?"

"Somebody and somebody else," replied Mr. Maynard, smiling.

"Oho, a secret!" exclaimed Midget. "Then it must be somebody nice! Let's guess, King."

"All right. Are they kids or grown-ups, Father?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.