

WELLS CAROLYN

MARJORIE'S
VACATION

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CHAPTER I

MARJORIE'S HOME

In the Maynards' side yard at Rockwell, a swingful of children was slowly swaying back and forth.

The swing was one of those big double wooden affairs that hold four people, so the Maynards just filled it comfortably.

It was a lovely soft summer day in the very beginning of June; the kind of day that makes anybody feel happy but a little bit subdued. The kind of day when the sky is so blue, and the air so clear, that everything seems dreamy and quiet.

But the Maynard children were little, if any, affected by the atmosphere, and though they did seem a trifle subdued, it was a most unusual state of things, and was brought about by reasons far more definite than sky or atmosphere.

Kingdon Maynard, the oldest of the four, and the only boy, was fourteen. These facts had long ago fixed his position as autocrat, dictator, and final court of appeal. Whatever King said, was law to the three girls, but as the boy was really a mild-mannered tyrant, no trouble ensued. Of late, though, he

had begun to show a slight inclination to go off on expeditions with other boys, in which girls were not included. But this was accepted by his sisters as a natural course of events, for of course, if King did it, it must be all right.

Next to Kingdon in the swing sat the baby, Rosamond, who was five years old, and who was always called Rosy Posy. She held in her arms a good-sized white Teddy Bear, who was adorned with a large blue bow and whose name was Boffin. He was the child's inseparable companion, and, as he was greatly beloved by the other children, he was generally regarded as a member of the family.

On the opposite seat of the swing sat Kitty, who was nine years old, and who closely embraced her favorite doll, Arabella.

And by Kitty's side sat Marjorie, who was almost twelve, and who also held a pet, which, in her case, was a gray Persian kitten. This kitten was of a most amiable disposition, and was named Puff, because of its fluffy silver fur and fat little body.

Wherever Marjorie went, Puff was usually with her, and oftenest hung over her arm, looking more like a fur boa than a cat.

At the moment, however, Puff was curled up in Marjorie's lap, and was merely a nondescript ball of fur.

These, then, were the Maynards, and though their parents would have said they had four children, yet the children themselves always said, "We are seven," and insisted on considering the kitten, the doll, and the bear as members of the

Maynard family.

Kingdon scorned pets, which the girls considered quite the right thing for a boy to do; and, anyway, Kingdon had enough to attend to, to keep the swing going.

"I 'most wish it wasn't my turn," said Marjorie, with a little sigh.

"Of course I want to go for lots of reasons, but I'd love to be in Rockwell this summer, too."

"As you're not twins you can't very well be in two places at once," said her brother; "but you'll have a gay old time, Mops; there's the new boathouse, you know, since you were there."

"I haven't been there for three years," said Marjorie, "and I suppose there'll be lots of changes."

"I was there two years ago," said Kitty, "but Arabella has never been."

"I'se never been, eever," said Rosy Posy, wistfully, "and so Boffin hasn't, too. But we don't want to go, us wants to stay home wiv Muvver."

"And I say, Mops, look out for the Baltimore oriole," went on Kingdon. "He had a nest in the big white birch last year, and like as not he'll be there again."

"There was a red-headed woodpecker two years ago," said Kitty; "perhaps he'll be there this summer."

"I hope so," said Marjorie; "I'm going to take my big Bird book, and then I can tell them all."

It was the custom in the Maynard household for one of the

children to go each summer to Grandma Sherwood's farm near Morristown. They took turns, but as Rosy Posy was so little she had not begun yet.

The children always enjoyed the vacation at Grandma's, but they were a chummy little crowd and dreaded the separation. This was the reason of their subdued and depressed air to-day.

It was Marjorie's turn, and she was to leave home the next morning. Mrs. Maynard was to accompany her on the journey, and then return, leaving Marjorie in the country for three months.

"I wonder how Puffy will like it," she said, as she picked up the kitten, and looked into its blue eyes.

"She'll be all right," said Kingdon, "if she doesn't fight with Grandma's cats. There were about a dozen there last year, and they may object to Puff's style of hair-dressing. Perhaps we'd better cut her hair before she starts."

"No, indeed!" cried Marjorie, "not a hair shall be touched, unless you'd like a lock to keep to remember her while she's gone."

"No, thank you," said King, loftily; "I don't carry bits of cat around in my pockets."

"I'd like a lock," said Kitty; "I'd tie it with a little blue ribbon, and keep it for a forget-me-not. And I'll give you a little curl of Arabella's, and you can keep that to remember her by."

"All right," said Marjorie; "and I'll take a lock of Boffin Bear's hair too. Then I'll have a memento of all the family, because I have pictures of all of you, you know."

With the Maynards to suggest was to act. So the four scrambled out of the swing, and ran to the house.

The Maynard house was a large square affair, with verandas all around. Not pretentious, but homelike and comfortable, and largely given over to the children's use. Though not often in the drawing-room, the four young Maynards frequently monopolized the large living-room, and were allowed free access to the library as well.

Also they had a general playroom and a nursery; and Kingdon had a small den or workroom for his own use, which was oftener than not invaded by the girls.

To the playroom they went, and Kingdon carefully cut small locks from the kitten, the doll, and the bear, and Marjorie neatly tied them with narrow blue ribbons. These mementoes the girls put away, and carefully treasured all through the summer.

Another Maynard custom was a farewell feast at dinner, the night before vacation began. Ordinarily, only the two older children dined with their parents, the other two having their tea in the nursery. But on this occasion, all were allowed at dinner, and the feast was made a special honor for the one who was going away. Gifts were made, as on a birthday, and festival dress was in order.

A little later, then, the four children presented themselves in the library, where their parents awaited them.

Mr. Maynard was a man of merry disposition and rollicking nature, and sometimes joined so heartily in the children's play

that he seemed scarcely older than they.

Mrs. Maynard was more sedate, and was a loving mother, though not at all a fussy one. She was glad in many ways to have one of her children spend the summer each year with her mother, but it always saddened her when the time of departure came.

She put her arm around Marjorie, without a word, as the girl came into the room, for it had been three years since the two had been parted, and Mrs. Maynard felt a little sad at the thought of separation.

"Don't look like that, Mother," said Marjorie, "for if you do, I'll begin to feel weepy, and I won't go at all."

"Oh, yes, you will, Miss Midge," cried her father; "you'll go, and you'll stay all summer, and you'll have a perfectly beautiful time. And, then, the first of September I'll come flying up there to get you, and bring you home, and it'll be all over. Now, such a short vacation as that isn't worth worrying about, is it?"

"No," put in Kingdon, "and last year when I went there wasn't any sad good-by."

"That's because you're a boy," said his mother, smiling at him proudly; "tearful good-bys are only for girls and women."

"Yes," said Mr. Maynard, "they enjoy them, you know. Now, I think it is an occasion of rejoicing that Marjorie is to go to Grandma's and have a happy, jolly vacation. We can all write letters to her, and she will write a big budget of a family letter that we can all enjoy together."

"And Mopsy must wite me a little letter, all for my own sef,"

remarked

Rosy Posy, "'cause I like to get letters all to me."

Baby Rosamond was dressed up for the occasion in a very frilly white frock, and being much impressed by the grandeur of staying up to dinner, she had solemnly seated herself in state on a big sofa, holding Boffin Bear in her arms. Her words, therefore, seemed to have more weight than when she was her everyday roly-poly self, tumbling about on the floor, and Marjorie at once promised that she should have some letters all to herself.

When dinner was announced, Mr. Maynard, with Marjorie, led the procession to the diningroom. They were followed by Mrs. Maynard and Rosamond, and after them came Kingdon and Kitty.

Kitty was a golden-haired little girl, quite in contrast to Marjorie, who had tangled masses of dark, curly hair and large, dark eyes. Her cheeks were round and rosy, and her little white teeth could almost always be seen, for merry Marjorie was laughing most of the time. To-night she wore one of her prettiest white dresses, and her dark curls were clustered at the top of her head into a big scarlet bow. The excitement of the occasion made her cheeks red and her eyes bright, and Mrs. Maynard looked at her pretty eldest daughter with a pardonable pride.

"Midge," she said, "there are just about a hundred things I ought to tell you before you go to Grandma's, but if I were to tell you now, you wouldn't remember one of them; so I have written them all down, and you must take the list with you, and

read it every morning so that you may remember and obey the instructions."

Midge was one of the numerous nicknames by which Marjorie was called. Her tumbling, curly hair, which was everlastingly escaping from its ribbon, had gained for her the title of Mops or Mopsy. Midge and Midget had clung to her from babyhood, because she was an active and energetic child, and so quick of motion that she seemed to dart like a midge from place to place. She never did anything slowly. Whether it was an errand for her mother or a game of play, Midge always moved rapidly. Her tasks were always done in half the time it took the other children to do theirs; but in consequence of this haste, they were not always done as well or as thoroughly as could be desired.

This, her mother often told her, was her besetting sin, and Marjorie truly tried to correct it when she thought of it; but often she was too busy with the occupation in hand to remember the good instructions she had received.

"I'm glad you did that, Mother," she replied to her mother's remark, "for I really haven't time to study the list now. But I'll promise to read it over every morning at Grandma's, and honest and true, I'll try to be good."

"Of course you will," said her father, heartily; "you'll be the best little girl in the world, except the two you leave here behind you."

"Me's the bestest," calmly remarked Rosamond, who seemed especially satisfied with herself that evening.

"You are," agreed King; "you look good enough to eat, to-night."

Rosamond beamed happily, for she was not unused to flattering observations from the family. And, indeed, she was a delicious-looking morsel of humanity, as she sat in her high chair, and tried her best to "behave like a lady."

The table was decorated with June roses and daisies. The dinner included Marjorie's favorite dishes, and the dessert was strawberries and ice cream, which, Kitty declared, always made a party, anyway.

So with the general air of celebration, and Mr. Maynard's gay chatter and jokes, the little trace of sadness that threatened to appear was kept out of sight, and all through the summer Marjorie had only pleasant memories of her last evening at home.

After the dessert the waitress appeared again with a trayful of parcels, done up in the most fascinating way, in tissue paper and dainty ribbons.

This, too, was always a part of the farewell feast, and Marjorie gave a little sigh of satisfaction, as the well-filled tray was placed before her.

"That's mine! Open mine first!" cried Rosamond, as Marjorie picked up a good-sized bundle.

"Yes, that's Rosy Posy's," said her mother, laughing, "and she picked it out herself, because she thought it would please you. Open it first, Midge."

So Marjorie opened the package, and discovered a little clock,

on the top of which was perched a brilliant red bird.

Rosamond clapped her hands in glee. "I knew you'd love it," she cried, "'cause it's a birdie, a yed birdie. And I finded it all myself in the man's shop. Do you yike it, Mopsy?"

"Indeed I do," cried Marjorie; "it's just what I wanted. I shall keep it on my dressing-table at Grandma's, and then I'll know just when to get up every morning."

"Open mine next," said Kitty; "it's the square flat one, with the blue ribbon."

So Marjorie opened Kitty's present and it was a picture, beautifully framed to hang on the wall at Grandma's. The picture was of birds, two beautiful orioles on a branch. The colors were so bright, and so true to nature, that Marjorie exclaimed in delight:

"Now I shall have orioles there, anyway, whether there are real ones in the trees or not. It is lovely, Kitsie, and I don't see how you ever found such a beautiful bird picture."

Marjorie had always been fond of birds, and lately had begun studying them in earnest. Orioles were among her favorites, and so Kitty's picture was a truly welcome gift. King's present came next, and was a beautiful gold pen with a pearl holder.

"That," he explained, "is so you'll write to us often. For I know, Mops, your old penholder is broken, and it's silver, anyway. This is nicer, because it's no trouble to keep it clean and bright."

"That's so, King, and I'm delighted with this one. I shall write

you a letter with it, first of all, and I'll tell you all about the farm."

Mrs. Maynard's gift was in a very small parcel, and when Marjorie opened it she found a dear little pearl ring.

"Oh, goody!" she cried. "I do love rings, and I never had one before!

May I wear it always, Mother?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Maynard, smiling. "I don't approve of much jewelry for a little girl not yet twelve years old, but you may wear that."

Marjorie put it on her finger with great satisfaction, and Kitty looked at it lovingly.

"May I have one when I am twelve, Mother?" she asked.

"May I, may I?" chimed in Rosy Posy.

"Yes," said Mr. Maynard; "you girls may each have one just like Marjorie's when you are as old as she is now. That last parcel, Mops, is my present for you. I'm not sure that you can learn to use it, but perhaps you can, and if not I'll take it back and exchange it for something else."

Marjorie eagerly untied the wrappings of her father's gift, and found a little snapshot camera.

"Indeed I can learn to use it," she cried; "I took some pictures once with a camera that belonged to one of the girls at school, and they were all right. Thank you heaps and heaps, father dear; I'll send you pictures of everything on the place; from Grandma herself down to the littlest, weeniest, yellow chicken."

"Next year it will be my turn to go," said Kitty; "I hope I'll get

as lovely presents as Mopsy has."

"You will," said Kingdon; "because last year mine were just as good, and so, of course, yours will be."

"I'm sure they will," said Kitty.

CHAPTER II

THE TRIP TO HASLEMERE

The next morning all was bustle and excitement.

Mr. Maynard stayed at home from business to escort the travellers to the train. The trunks were packed, and everything was in readiness for their departure. Marjorie herself, in a spick-and-span pink gingham dress, a tan-colored travelling cloak, and a broad-brimmed white straw hat, stood in the hall saying good-bye to the other children. She carried Puff in her arm, and the sleepy, indifferent kitten cared little whither she was going.

"Be sure," Kingdon was saying, "to plant the seeds I gave you in a sunny place, for if you don't they won't grow right."

"What are the seeds?" asked Marjorie.

"Never mind that," said her brother; "you just plant them in a warm, sunny bed, in good, rich soil, and then you wait and see what comes up. It's a surprise."

"All right, I'll do that, and I suppose Grandma will give me a lot of seeds besides; we always have gardens, you know."

"Be sure to write to me," said Kitty, "about Molly Moss. She's the one that lives in the next house but one to Grandma's. You've never seen her, but I saw her two years ago, and she's an awfully nice girl. You'll like her, I know."

"And what shall I remember to do for you, Rosy Posy?" asked

Marjorie, as she kissed the baby good-bye.

"Don't know," responded the little one; "I've never been to Gamma's. Is they piggy-wigs there?"

"No," said Marjorie, laughing; "no piggy-wigs, but some nice ducks."

"All wite; b'ing me a duck."

"I will, if Grandma will give me one"; and then Marjorie was hurried down the steps by her father, and into the carriage, and away she went, with many a backward look at the three children who stood on the veranda waving good-byes to her.

The railroad trip to Morristown lasted about four hours, and Marjorie greatly enjoyed it. Mr. Maynard had put the two travellers into their chairs in the parlor car, and arranged their belongings for them. Marjorie had brought a book to read and a game to play, but with the novel attractions of the trip and the care of her kitten, she was not likely to have time hang heavily on her hands.

Mrs. Maynard read a magazine for a time, and then they were summoned to luncheon in the diningcar. Marjorie thought this great fun, for what is nicer than to be a hungry little girl of twelve, and to eat all sorts of good things, while flying swiftly along in a railroad train, and gazing out of the window at towns and cities rushing by?

Marjorie sat opposite her mother, and observed with great interest the other passengers about. Across the car was a little girl who seemed to be about her own age, and Marjorie greatly

wished that they might become acquainted. Mrs. Maynard said that after luncheon she might go and speak to the little stranger if she chose, and Marjorie gladly did so.

"I wonder if you belong in my car," said Marjorie, by way of opening the conversation.

"I don't know," said the other child; "our seats are in the car just back of this."

"We are two cars back," said Marjorie, "but perhaps your mother will let you come into my car a while. I have my kitten with me."

"Where is it?" asked the other little girl.

"I had to leave it with the porter while we came to luncheon. Oh, she's the loveliest kitten you ever saw, and her name is Puff. What's your name?"

"My name is Stella Martin. What's yours?"

"My real name is Marjorie Maynard. But I'm almost always called Midge or Mops or some name like that. We all have nicknames at home; don't you?"

"No, because you see I haven't any brothers or sisters. Mother always calls me Stella."

"Well, let's go and ask her if you can't come into my car for a while.

My mother will look after you, and then you can see the kitten."

After some courteous words of explanation between the two mothers,

Stella was allowed to play with Marjorie for the rest of the journey.

Seated together in one of the big Pullman easy chairs, with the kitten cuddled between them, they rapidly made each other's acquaintance, and soon became good friends. They were not at all alike, for Stella Martin was a thin, pale child with a long braid of straight, light hair, and light blue eyes. She was timid, too, and absolutely devoid of Marjorie's impetuosity and daring. But they were both pleased at the discovery that they were to be near neighbors throughout the summer. Stella's home was next-door to Grandma Sherwood's, although, as both country places were so large, the houses were some distance apart.

Next beyond Stella's house, Marjorie remembered, was where Molly Moss lived, and so the outlook seemed to promise plenty of pleasant company.

About three o'clock in the afternoon the train reached Morristown, and springing out on the platform, Marjorie soon spied Grandma Sherwood's carriage there to meet them. Old Moses was still in charge of the horses, as he had been ever since Marjorie could remember, and in a moment she heard a hearty voice cry, "Oh, there you are!" and there was Uncle Steve waiting for them on the platform.

Uncle Steve was a great friend of Marjorie's, and she flew to greet him almost before he had time to welcome her mother. Then in a few moments the luggage was looked after, and they were all in the carriage, rolling away toward Haslemere.

Marjorie chatted away like a magpie, for she had many questions to ask Uncle Steve, and as she was looking out to renew acquaintance with old landmarks along the road, the drive to the house seemed very short, and soon they were turning in at the gate.

Haslemere was not a large, old-fashioned farm, but a fair-sized and well-kept country place. Grandma Sherwood, who had been a widow for many years, lived there with her son Stephen. It was like a farm, because there were chickens and ducks, and cows and horses, and also a large garden where fresh vegetables of all sorts were raised. But there were no grain fields or large pasture lands, or pigs or turkeys, such as belong to larger farms. The drive from the gate up to the house was a long avenue, shaded on both sides by beautiful old trees, and the wide expanse of lawn was kept as carefully mowed as if at a town house. There were flower beds in abundance, and among the trees and shrubbery were rustic seats and arbors, hammocks and swings, and a delightful tent where the children loved to play. Back of the house the land sloped down to the river, which was quite large enough for delightful boating and fishing.

The house was of that old-fashioned type which has two front doors and two halls, with large parlors between them, and wings on either side. A broad veranda ran across the front, and, turning both corners, ran along either side.

As they drove up to the house, Grandma Sherwood was on the piazza waiting for them. She was not a very old lady, that is, she

was not of the white-haired, white-capped, and silver-spectacled variety. She was perhaps sixty years old, and seemed quite as energetic and enthusiastic as her daughter, if perhaps not quite so much so as her granddaughter.

Marjorie sprang out of the carriage, and flew like a young whirlwind to her grandmother's arms, which were open to receive her.

"My dear child, how you have grown!"

"I knew you'd say that, Grandma," said Marjorie, laughing merrily, "and, indeed, I have grown since I was here last. Just think, that was three years ago! I'm almost twelve years old now."

"Well, you are a great girl; run in the house, and lay off your things, while I speak to your mother."

Marjorie danced into the house, flung her coat and gloves on the hall rack, and still holding her kitten, went on through to the kitchen, in search of Eliza the cook.

"The saints presarve us!" cried Eliza. "An' is it yersilf, Miss Midget!"

Why, ye're as big as a tellygraft pole, so ye are!"

"I know I am, Eliza, but you're just the same as ever; and just look at the kitten I have brought! Have you any here now?"

"Cats, is it? Indade we have, then! I'm thinkin' there do be a hundred dozen of thim; they're undher me feet continual! But what kind of a baste is that ye have there? I niver saw such a woolly one!"

"This is a Persian kitten, Eliza, and her name is Puff. Isn't she

pretty?"

"I'll not be sayin' she's purty, till I see how she doos be behavin'.

Is she a good little cat, Miss Midget dear?"

"Good! Indeed she is a good kitty. And I wish you'd give her some milk,

Eliza, while I run out to see the chickens. Is Carter out there?"

But without waiting for an answer, Marjorie was already flying down through the garden, and soon found Carter, the gardener, at his work.

"Hello, Carter!" she cried. "How are you this summer?"

"Welcome, Miss Midge! I'm glad to see you back," exclaimed the old gardener, who was very fond of the Maynard children.

"And I'm glad to be here, Carter; and I have some seeds to plant; will you help me plant them?"

"That I will. What are they?"

"I don't know; King gave them to me, but he wouldn't tell me what they were."

"Ah, the mischievous boy! Now, how can we tell where to plant them when we don't know if they'll come up lilies of the valley or elephant's ears?"

Marjorie laughed gayly. "It doesn't matter, Carter," she said; "let's stick them in some sunny place, and then, if they seem to be growing too high, we can transplant them."

"It's a wise little head you have, Miss; we'll do just that."

Humoring Marjorie's impatience, the good-natured gardener

helped her plant the seeds in a sunny flowerbed, and raked the dirt neatly over them with an experienced touch.

"That looks lovely," said Marjorie, with a satisfied nod of approval; "now let's go and see the chickens."

This proved even more interesting than she had anticipated, for since her last visit an incubator had been purchased, and there were hundreds of little chickens of various sizes, in different compartments, to be looked at and admired.

"Aren't they darlings!" exclaimed Marjorie, as she watched the little yellow balls trying to balance themselves on slender little brown stems that hardly seemed as if they could be meant for legs. "Oh, Carter, I shall spend hours out here every day!"

"Do, Miss Midge; I'll be glad to have you, and the chickens won't mind it a bit."

"Now the horses," Marjorie went on, and off they went to the stables, where Moses had already unharnessed the carriage team, and put them in their stalls. Uncle Steve had a new saddle horse, which came in for a large share of admiration, and the old horse, Betsy, which Grandma Sherwood liked to drive herself, was also to be greeted.

Marjorie loved all animals, but after cats, horses were her favorites.

"Are there any ducks this year, Carter?" she inquired.

"Yes, Miss Midge, there is a duck-pond full of them; and you haven't seen the new boathouse that was built last year for Master Kingdon."

"No, but I want to see it; and oh, Carter, don't you think you could teach me to row?"

"I'm sure of it, Miss Midge; but I hear your grandmother calling you, and I think you'd better leave the boathouse to see to-morrow."

"All right; I think so too, Carter." And Marjorie ran back to the house, her broad-brimmed hat in one hand and her hair ribbon in the other, while her curls were, indeed, in a tangled mop.

CHAPTER III

ON THE ROOF

"Why, Mopsy Maynard," exclaimed her mother, as Marjorie danced into the house, smiling and dishevelled, "what a looking head! Please go straight to your room, and make yourself tidy before supper time."

"Yes, indeed, Mother, but just listen a minute! Uncle Steve has a new horse, a black one, and there are a hundred million little chickens, in the queerest kind of a thing, but I can't remember its name,—it's something like elevator."

"Incubator, perhaps," suggested her mother.

"Yes, that's it; and oh, Mother, it's so funny! Do come out and see it, won't you?"

"Not to-night, child; and now run up to your room and tie up your hair."

Marjorie danced upstairs, singing as she went, but when she reached the door of the room she was accustomed to use, she stopped her singing and stood in the doorway, stock-still with sheer bewilderment.

For somehow the room had been entirely transformed, and looked like a totally different apartment.

The room was in one of the wings of the house, and was large and square, with windows on two sides. But these had

been ordinary windows, and now they were replaced by large, roomy bay windows, with glass doors that reached from floor to ceiling, and opened out on little balconies. In one of these bay windows was a dear little rocking-chair painted white, and a standard work-basket of dainty white and green wicker, completely furnished with sewing materials. In the other bay window was a dear little writing-desk of bird's-eye maple, and a wicker chair in front of it. The desk was open, and Marjorie could see all sorts of pens and pencils and paper in fascinating array.

But these were only a few of the surprises. The whole room had been redecorated, and the walls were papered with a design of yellow daffodils in little bunches tied with pale green ribbon. The woodwork was all painted white, and entirely around the room, at just about the height of Marjorie's chin, ran a broad white shelf. Of course this shelf stopped for the windows and doors, but the room was large, and there was a great deal of space left for the shelf. But it was the things on the shelf that attracted Marjorie's attention. One side of the room was devoted to books, and Marjorie quickly recognized many of her old favorites, and many new ones. On another side of the room the shelf was filled with flowers, some blooming gayly in pots, and some cut blossoms in vases of water. On a third side of the room the shelf held birds, and this sight nearly took Marjorie's breath away. Some were in gilt cages, a canary, a goldfinch, and another bird whose name Marjorie did not know. And some were stuffed birds of brilliant plumage, and mounted in most natural positions on

twigs or branches, or perched upon an ivy vine which was trained along the wall. The fourth side was almost empty, and Marjorie knew at once that it was left so in order that she might have a place for such treasured belongings as she had brought with her.

"Well!" she exclaimed, although there was no one there to hear her. "Well, if this isn't the best ever!" She stood in the middle of the room, and turned slowly round and round, taking in by degrees the furnishings and adornment. All of the furniture was new, and the brass bed and dainty dressing-table seemed to Marjorie quite fit for any princess.

"Well!" she exclaimed again, and as she turned around this time she saw the older people watching her from the hall.

"Oh, Grandma Sherwood!" she cried, and running to the old lady, proceeded to hug her in a way that was more affectionate than comfortable.

"Do you like it?" asked Grandma, when she could catch her breath.

"Like it! It's the most beautiful, loveliest, sweetest room in the whole world! I love it! Did you do it all for me, Grandma?"

"Yes, Midget; that is, I fixed up the room, but for the shelf you must thank Uncle Steve. That is his idea entirely, and he superintended its putting up. You're to use it this year, and next year Kitty can have her dolls and toys on it, and then the year after, King can use it for his fishing-tackle and boyish traps. Though I suppose by that time Rosamond will be old enough to take her turn."

"Then I can't come again for four years," exclaimed Marjorie, with an expression of consternation on her face.

"Not unless you come two at a time," said Grandma; "and I doubt if your mother would consent to that."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Maynard; "it's hard enough to lose one of the flock, without losing two."

"Well, I'll have a good time with it this summer, anyway," said Marjorie; "can't we unpack my trunk now, Mother, so I can put my pearl pen in my desk; and my clock, that Rosy Posy gave me, on the shelf; and hang up my bird picture on the wall?"

"Not just now," said her mother, "for it is nearly supper time, and you must transform yourself from a wild maid of the woods into a decorous little lady."

The transformation was accomplished, and it was not very long before a very neat and tidy Marjorie walked sedately downstairs to the dining-room. Her white dress was immaculate; a big white bow held the dark curls in place, and only the dancing eyes betrayed the fact that it was an effort to behave so demurely.

"Well, Midget," said Uncle Steve, as they were seated at the supper table, "does the old place look the same?"

"No, indeed, Uncle; there are lots of changes, but best of all is my beauty room. I never saw anything so lovely; I just want to stay up there all the time."

"I thought you'd like that shelf. Now you have room for all the thousand and one bits of rubbish that you accumulate through the summer."

"'Tisn't rubbish!" exclaimed Marjorie, indignantly; "it's dear little birds' nests, and queer kinds of rocks, and branches of strange trees and grasses and things."

"Well, I only meant it sounds to me like rubbish," said Uncle Steve, who loved to tease her about her enthusiasms.

But she only smiled good-naturedly, for she well knew that Uncle Steve was the very one who would take her for long walks in the woods, on purpose to gather this very "rubbish."

The next day Marjorie was up bright and early, quite ready for any pleasure that might offer itself.

Her mother went back home that day, and though Marjorie felt a little sad at parting, yet, after all, Grandma Sherwood's house was like a second home, and there was too much novelty and entertainment all about to allow time for feeling sad.

Moreover, Marjorie was of a merry, happy disposition. It was natural to her to make the best of everything, and even had she had reasons for being truly miserable, she would have tried to be happy in spite of them.

So she bade her mother good-by, and sent loving messages to all at home, and promised to write often.

"Remember," said her mother, as a parting injunction, "to read every morning the list I gave you, which includes all my commands for the summer. When I see you again I shall expect you to tell me that you obeyed them all."

"I will try," said Marjorie; "but if it is a long list I may forget some of them sometimes. You know, Mother, I AM forgetful."

"You are, indeed," said Mrs. Maynard, smiling; "but if you'll try I think you'll succeed, at least fairly well. Good-bye now, dear; I must be off; and do you go at once to your room and read over the list so as to start the day right."

"I will," said Marjorie, and as soon as she had waved a last good-bye, and the carriage had disappeared from view, she ran to her room, and sitting down at her pretty desk, unfolded the list her mother had given her.

To her great surprise, instead of the long list she had expected to find, there were only two items. The first was, "Keep your hands clean, and your hair tidy"; and the other read, "Obey Grandma implicitly."

"Well," thought Marjorie to herself, "I can easily manage those two! And yet," she thought further, with a little sigh, "they're awfully hard ones. My hands just WON'T keep clean, and my hair ribbon is forever coming off! And of course I MEAN to obey Grandma always; but sometimes she's awful strict, and sometimes I forget what she told me."

But with a firm resolve in her heart to do her best, Marjorie went downstairs, and went out to play in the garden.

Some time later she saw a girl of about her own age coming down the path toward her. She was a strange-looking child, with a very white face, snapping black eyes, and straight wiry black hair, braided in two little braids, which stood out straight from her head.

"Are you Marjorie?" she said, in a thin, piping voice. "I'm

Molly Moss, and I've come to play with you. I used to know Kitty."

"Yes," said Marjorie, pleasantly, "I'm Marjorie, and I'm Kitty's sister. I'm glad you came. Is that your kitten?"

"Yes," said Molly, as she held up a very small black kitten, which was indeed an insignificant specimen compared to the Persian beauty hanging over Marjorie's arm.

"It's a dear kitten," Molly went on. "Her name is Blackberry. Don't you like her?"

"Yes," said Marjorie, a little doubtfully; "perhaps she can be company for Puff. This is my Puff." Marjorie held up her cat, but the two animals showed very little interest in one another.

"Let's put them to sleep somewhere," said Molly, "and then go and play in the loft."

The kittens were soon deposited in the warm kitchen, and the two girls ran back to the barn for a good play. Marjorie had already begun to like Molly, though she seemed rather queer at first, but after they had climbed the ladder to the warm sweet-smelling hay-loft, they grew better acquainted, and were soon chattering away like old friends.

Molly was not at all like Stella Martin. Far from being timid, she was recklessly daring, and very ingenious in the devising of mischief.

"I'll tell you what, Mopsy," she said, having already adopted Marjorie's nickname, "let's climb out of the window, that skylight window, I mean, onto the roof of the barn, and slide down. It's

a lovely long slide."

"We'll slide off!" exclaimed Marjorie, aghast at this proposition.

"Oh, no, we won't; there's a ledge at the edge of the roof, and your heels catch that, and that stops you. You CAN'T go any further."

"How do you get back?"

"Why, scramble back up the roof, you know. Come on, it's lots of fun."

"I don't believe Grandma would like it," said Marjorie, a little doubtfully.

"Oh, pshaw, you're afraid; there's no danger. Come on and try it, anyhow."

Now Marjorie did not like to be called afraid, for she really had very little fear in her disposition. So she said: "Well, I'll go up the ladder and look out, and if it looks dangerous I won't do it."

"Not a bit of danger," declared Molly. "I'll go up first." Agile as a sprite, Molly quickly skipped up the ladder, and opened the trap-door in the barn roof. Sticking her head up through, she soon drew her thin little body up after it and called to Marjorie to follow. Marjorie was a much heavier child, but she sturdily climbed the ladder, and then with some difficulty clambered out on the roof.

"Isn't it gay?" cried Molly, and exhilarated by the lofty height, the novel position, and the excitement of the moment, Marjorie thought it was.

"Now," went on Molly, by way of instruction, "sit down beside me right here at the top. Hang on with your hands until I count three and then let go, and we'll slide straight down the roof."

Marjorie obeyed directions, and sat waiting with a delightful feeling of expectancy.

"One, two, three!" counted Molly, and at the last word the two girls let go their grasp and slid.

Swiftly and lightly the slender little Molly slid to the gutter of the eaves of the roof, caught by her heels, and stopped suddenly, leaning against the slanted roof, comfortably at her ease.

Not so Marjorie. She came swiftly down, and, all unaccustomed to motion of this sort, her feet struck the gutter, her solid little body bounced up into the air, and instead of falling backward again, she gave a frightened convulsive movement, and fell headlong to the ground.

Quick as a flash, Molly, when she saw what had happened, scrambled back up the roof with a wonderful agility, and let herself down through the skylight, and down the ladder like lightning. She rushed out of the barn, to where Marjorie lay, and reached her before Carter did, though he came running at the first sounds of Marjorie's screams.

"I'm not hurt much," said Marjorie, trying to be brave; "if you'll help me, Carter, I think I can walk to the house."

"Walk nothin'," growled Carter; "it's Miss Mischief you are for sure! I thought you had outgrown your wild ways, but you're just as bad as ever! What'll your grandma say?"

Molly stood by, decidedly scared. She didn't know how badly Marjorie was hurt, and she longed to comfort her, and tell her how sorry she was that she had urged her to this mischief, but Carter gave her no opportunity to speak. Indeed, it was all she could do to keep up with the gardener's long strides, as he carried Marjorie to the house. But Molly was no coward, and she bravely determined to go to the house with them, and confess to Mrs. Sherwood that she was to blame for the accident.

But when they reached the door, and Grandma Sherwood came out to meet them, she was so anxious and worried about Marjorie that she paid little attention to Molly's efforts at explanation.

"What are you trying to say, child?" she asked hastily of Molly, who was stammering out an incoherent speech. "Well, never mind; whatever you have to say, I don't want to hear it now. You run right straight home; and if you want to come over tomorrow to see how Marjorie is, you may, but I can't have you bothering around here now. So run home."

And Molly ran home.

CHAPTER IV

A PAPER-DOLL HOUSE

The result of Marjorie's fall from the roof was a sprained ankle. It wasn't a bad sprain, but the doctor said she must stay in bed for several days.

"But I don't mind very much," said Marjorie, who persisted in looking on the bright side of everything, "for it will give me a chance to enjoy this beautiful room better. But, Grandma, I can't quite make out whether I was disobedient or not. You never told me not to slide down the roof, did you?"

"No, Marjorie; but your common-sense ought to have told you that. I should have forbidden it if I had thought there was the slightest danger of your doing such a thing. You really ought to have known better."

Grandma's tone was severe, for though she was sorry for the child she felt that Marjorie had done wrong, and ought to be reproved.

Marjorie's brow wrinkled in her efforts to think out the matter. "Grandma," she said, "then must I obey every rule that you would make if you thought of it, and how shall I know what they are?"

Grandma smiled. "As I tell you Midget, you must use your common-sense and reason in such matters. If you make mistakes

the experience will help you to learn; but I am sure a child twelve years old ought to know better than to slide down a steep barn roof. But I suppose Molly put you up to it, and so it wasn't your fault exactly."

"Molly did suggest it, Grandma, but that doesn't make her the one to blame, for I didn't have to do as she said, did I?"

"No, Midge; and Molly has behaved very nicely about it. She came over here, and confessed that she had been the ringleader in the mischief, and said she was sorry for it. So you were both to blame, but I think it has taught you a lesson, and I don't believe you'll ever cut up that particular trick again. But you certainly needn't be punished for it, for I think the consequences of having to stay in bed for nearly a week will be punishment enough. So now we're through with that part of the subject, and I'm going to do all I can to make your imprisonment as easy for you as possible."

It was in the early morning that this conversation had taken place, and Grandma had brought a basin of fresh, cool water and bathed the little girl's face and hands, and had brushed out her curls and tied them up with a pretty pink bow.

Then Jane came with a dainty tray, containing just the things Marjorie liked best for breakfast, and adorned with a spray of fresh roses. Grandma drew a table to the bedside and piled pillows behind Marjorie's back until she was quite comfortable.

"I feel like a queen, Grandma," she said; "if this is what you call punishment I don't mind it a bit."

"That's all very well for one day, but wait until you have been here four or five days. You'll get tired of playing queen by that time."

"Well, it's fun now, anyway," said Marjorie, as she ate strawberries and cream with great relish.

After breakfast Jane tidied up the room, and Marjorie, arrayed in a little pink kimono, prepared to spend the day in bed. Grandma brought her books to read and writing materials to write letters home, and Marjorie assured her that she could occupy herself pleasantly.

So Grandma went away and left her alone. The first thing Marjorie did was to write a letter to her mother, telling her all about the accident. She had thought she would write a letter to each of the children at home, but she discovered to her surprise that it wasn't very easy to write sitting up in bed. Her arms became cramped, and as she could not move her injured ankle her whole body grew stiff and uncomfortable. So she decided to read. After she had read what seemed a long time, she found that that, too, was difficult under the circumstances. With a little sigh she turned herself as well as she could and looked at the clock. To her amazement, only an hour had elapsed since Grandma left her, and for the first time the little girl realized what it meant to be deprived of the free use of her limbs.

"Only ten o'clock," she thought to herself; "and dinner isn't until one!"

Not that Marjorie was hungry, but like all the invalids she

looked forward to meal-times as a pleasant diversion.

But about this time Grandma reappeared to say that Molly had come over to see her.

Marjorie was delighted, and welcomed Molly gladly.

"I'm awful sorry," the little visitor began, "that I made you slide down the roof."

"You didn't make me do it," said Marjorie, "it was my fault quite as much as yours; and, anyway, it isn't a very bad sprain. I'll be out again in a few days, and then we can play some more. But we'll keep down on the ground,—we can't fall off of that."

"I thought you might like to play some games this morning," Molly suggested, "so I brought over my jackstraws and my Parcheesi board."

"Splendid!" cried Marjorie, delighted to have new entertainment.

In a few moments Molly had whisked things about, and arranged the jackstraws on a small table near the bed. But Marjorie could not reach them very well, so Molly changed her plan.

"I'll fix it," she said, and laying the Parcheesi board on the bed, she climbed up herself, and sitting cross-legged like a little Turk, she tossed the jackstraws out on the flat board, and the game began in earnest.

They had a jolly time and followed the jackstraws with a game of
Parcheesi.

Then Jane came up with some freshly baked cookies and two glasses of milk.

"Why, how the time has flown!" cried Marjorie, "it's half-past eleven, and it doesn't seem as if you'd been here more than five minutes, Molly."

"I didn't think it was so late, either," and then the two girls did full justice to the little luncheon, while the all-useful Parcheesi board served as a table.

"Now," said Marjorie, when the last crumbs had disappeared, "let's mix up the two games. The jackstraws will be people, and your family can live in that corner of the Parcheesi board, and mine will live in this. The other two corners will be strangers' houses, and the red counters can live in one and the blue counters in the other. This place in the middle will be a park, and these dice can be deer in the park."

"Oh, what fun!" cried Molly, who was not as ingenious as Marjorie at making up games, but who was appreciative enough to enter into the spirit of it at once.

They became so absorbed in this new sort of play that again the time flew and it was dinner-time before they knew it.

Grandma did not invite Molly to stay to dinner, for she thought Marjorie ought to rest, but she asked the little neighbor to come again the next morning and continue their game.

After dinner Grandma darkened the room and left Marjorie to rest by herself, and the result of this was a long and refreshing nap.

When she awoke, Grandma appeared again with fresh water and towels, and her afternoon toilet was made. Marjorie laughed to think that dressing for afternoon meant only putting on a different kimono, for dresses were not to be thought of with a sprained ankle.

And then Uncle Steve came in.

Uncle Steve was always like a ray of sunshine, but he seemed especially bright and cheery just now.

"Well, Midget Mops," he said, "you have cut up a pretty trick, haven't you? Here, just as I wanted to take you driving, and walking in the woods, and boating, and fishing, and perhaps ballooning, and airshipping, and maybe skating, here you go and get yourself laid up so you can't do anything but eat and sleep! You're a nice Midget, you are! What's the use of having an Uncle Steve if you can't play with him?"

"Just you wait," cried Marjorie; "I'm not going to be in bed more than a few days, and I'm going to stay here all summer. There'll be plenty of time for your fishing and skating yet."

"But unless I get you pretty soon, I'll pine away with grief. And everybody out on the farm is lonesome for you. The horses, Ned and Dick, had made up their minds to take you on long drives along the mountain roads where the wild flowers bloom. They can't understand why you don't come out, and they stand in their stalls weeping, with great tears rolling down their cheeks."

Marjorie laughed gayly at Uncle Steve's foolery, and said: "If they're weeping so you'd better take them some of my pocket

handkerchiefs."

"Too small," said Uncle Steve, scornfully; "one of your little handkerchiefs would get lost in Dick's eye or Ned's ear. And old Betsy is weeping for you too. Really, you'll have to get around soon, or those three horses will run away, I fear."

"What about the cow; does she miss me?" asked Marjorie, gravely, though her eyes were twinkling.

"The cow!" exclaimed Uncle Steve. "She stands by the fence with her head on the top rail, and moos so loud that I should think you could hear her yourself. She calls 'Mopsy, Mopsy, Moo,' from morning till night. And the chickens! Well, the incubator is full of desolate chickens. They won't eat their meal, and they just peep mournfully, and stretch their little wings trying to fly to you."

"And the dogs?" prompted Marjorie.

"Oh, the dogs—they howl and yowl and growl all the time. I think I'll have to bring the whole crowd of animals up here. They're so anxious to see you."

"Do, Uncle Steve. I'd be glad to see them, and I'm sure they'd behave nicely."

"I think so. The cow could sit in that little rocking-chair, and the three horses could sit on the couch, side by side. And then we could all have afternoon tea."

Marjorie shook with laughter at the thought of the cow sitting up and drinking afternoon tea, until Uncle Steve declared that if she laughed so hard she'd sprain her other ankle. So he said he

would read to her, and selecting a book of fairy tales, he read aloud all the rest of the afternoon. It was delightful to hear Uncle Steve read, for he would stop now and then to discuss the story, or he would put in some funny little jokes of his own, and he made it all so amusing and entertaining that the afternoon flew by as if on wings.

Then Jane came again with the pretty tray of supper, and after that Grandma and Marjorie had a nice little twilight talk, and then the little girl was tucked up for the night, and soon fell asleep.

When she woke the next morning and lay quietly in bed thinking over of the events of the day before, she came to the conclusion that everybody had been very kind to her, but that she couldn't expect so much attention every day. So she made up her mind that when she had to spend hours alone, she would try to be good and patient and not trouble Grandma more than she could help.

Then she thought of the written list her mother had given her. She smiled to think how easy it was now to keep those commands. "Of course," she thought, "I can keep my hands clean and my hair tidy here, for Grandma looks after that herself; and, of course, I can't help obeying her while I'm here, for she doesn't command me to do anything, and I couldn't do it if she did."

Molly came again that morning, and as Grandma had asked her to stay to dinner with Marjorie, the girls prepared for a good morning's play.

It was astonishing how many lovely things there were to play, even when one of the players couldn't move about.

Molly had brought over her paper-doll's house, and as it was quite different from anything Marjorie had ever seen before, she wondered if she couldn't make one for herself, and so double the fun of the game.

Grandma was consulted, but it was Uncle Steve who brought them the necessary materials to carry out their plan.

A paper-doll's house is quite different from the other kind of a doll's house, and Molly's was made of a large blankbook.

So Uncle Steve brought a blankbook almost exactly like it for Marjorie, and then he brought her scissors, and paste, and several catalogues which had come from the great shops in the city. He brought, too, a pile of magazines and papers, which were crammed full of illustrated advertisements.

The two little girls set busily to work, and soon they had cut out a quantity of chairs, tables, beds, and furniture of all sorts from the pictured pages.

These they pasted in the book. Each page was a room, and in the room were arranged appropriate furniture and ornaments.

The parlor had beautiful and elaborate furniture, rugs, pictures, bric-a-brac, and even lace curtains at the windows. The library had beautiful bookcases, writing-desk, reading-table and a lamp, easy-chairs, and everything that belongs in a well-ordered library.

The dining-room was fully furnished, and the kitchen

contained everything necessary to the satisfaction of the most exacting cook.

The bedrooms were beautiful with dainty brass beds, chintz-covered furniture, and dressing-tables fitted out with all sorts of toilet equipments.

All of these things were found in the catalogues and the magazine advertisements; and in addition to the rooms mentioned, there were halls, a nursery, playroom, and pleasant verandas fitted up with hammocks and porch furniture.

Of course it required some imagination to think that these rooms were in the shape of a house, and not just leaves of a book, but both Midge and Molly had plenty of imagination, and besides it was very practical fun to cut out the things, and arrange them in their places. Sometimes it was necessary to use a pencil to draw in any necessary article that might be missing; but usually everything desired could be found, from potted palms to a baby carriage.

Marjorie grew absorbed in the work, for she dearly loved to make things, and her ingenuity suggested many improvements on Molly's original house.

CHAPTER V

SOME INTERESTING LETTERS

The family for the paper-doll house was selected from the catalogues that illustrate ready-made clothing. Beautiful gentlemen were cut out, dressed in the most approved fashions for men. Charming ladies with trailing skirts and elaborate hats were found in plenty. And children of all ages were so numerous in the prints that it was almost difficult to make a selection. Then, too, extra hats and wraps and parasols were cut out, which could be neatly put away in the cupboards and wardrobes which were in the house. For Marjorie had discovered that by pasting only the edges of the wardrobe and carefully cutting the doors apart, they could be made to open and shut beautifully.

Uncle Steve became very much interested in these wonderful houses, and ransacked his own library for pictures to be cut up.

Indeed, so elaborate did the houses grow to be, Molly's being greatly enlarged and improved, that they could not be finished in one morning.

But Grandma was not willing to let Marjorie work steadily at this occupation all day, and after dinner Molly was sent home, and the paper dolls put away until the next day.

"But I'm not ill, Grandma," said Marjorie; "just having a sprained ankle doesn't make me a really, truly invalid."

"No, but you must rest, or you will get ill. Fever may set in, and if you get over-excited with your play, and have no exercise, you may be in bed longer than you think for. Besides, I think I remember having heard something about implicit obedience, and so I expect it now as well as when you're up on your two feet."

"I don't think I can help obeying," said Marjorie, roguishly, "for I can't very well do anything else. But I suppose you mean obey without fretting; so I will, for you are a dear, good Grandma and awfully kind to me."

With a parting pat on her shoulder, Grandma left the little girl for her afternoon nap, and Marjorie would have been surprised at herself had she known how quickly she fell asleep.

Uncle Steve made it a habit to entertain her during the later hours of each afternoon, and, although they were already great chums, his gayety and kindness made Marjorie more than ever devoted to her uncle.

This afternoon he came in with a handful of letters.

"These are all for you," he said; "it is astonishing what a large correspondence you have."

Marjorie was amazed. She took the budget of letters her uncle handed her and counted five. They were all duly stamped, and all were postmarked, but the postmarks all read Haslemere.

"How funny!" exclaimed Marjorie; "I didn't know there was a post office at Haslemere."

"You didn't!" exclaimed Uncle Steve; "why, there certainly is. Do you mean to say that you don't know that there's a little post

office in the lowest branch of that old maple-tree down by the brook?"

"You mean just where the path turns to go to the garden?"

"That's the very spot. Only this morning I was walking by there, and I saw a small post office in the tree. There was a key in the door of it, and being curious, I opened it, and looked in. There I saw five letters for you, and as you're not walking much this summer, I thought I'd bring them to you. I brought the key, too."

As he finished speaking, Uncle Steve drew from his pocket a little bright key hung on a blue ribbon, which he gravely presented to Marjorie. Her eyes danced as she took it, for she now believed there was really a post office there, though it was sometimes difficult to distinguish Uncle Steve's nonsense from the truth.

"Now I'm more than ever anxious to get well," she cried, "and go out to see that post office."

"Oh, no," said Uncle Steve, shaking his head; "you don't care about post offices and walks in the woods, and drives through the country. You'd rather slide down an old barn roof, and then lie in bed for a week."

"Catch me doing it again," said Marjorie, shaking her head decidedly; "and now, Uncle, suppose we open these letters."

"Why, that wouldn't be a bad idea. Here's a paper-cutter. Let's open one at a time, they'll last longer. Suppose you read this one first."

Marjorie opened the first letter, and quickly turned the page to see the signature.

"Why, Uncle Steve," she cried, "this is signed Ned and Dick! I didn't know horses could write letters."

"There are a great many things, my child, that you don't know yet. And so Ned and Dick have written to you! Now that's very kind of them. Read me what they say."

In great glee, Marjorie read aloud:

"DEAR MARJORIE:

It is too bad
For you to act this way;
Just think what fun we might have had
Out driving every day.

"We could have gone to Blossom Banks,
Or Maple Grove instead;
But no, you had to cut up pranks
That landed you in bed!

"We hope you'll soon be well again,
And get downstairs right quick;
And we will all go driving then.
Your true friends,

NED AND DICK."

"Well, I do declare," said Uncle Steve, "I always said they were intelligent horses, but this is the first time I've ever heard of their writing a letter. They must be very fond of you, Marjorie."

Marjorie's eyes twinkled. She well knew Uncle Steve had written the letter himself, but she was always ready to carry out her part of a joke, so she replied:

"Yes, I think they must be fond of me, and I think I know somebody else who is, too. But it was nice of Ned and Dick to write and let me know that they hadn't forgotten me. And as soon as I can get downstairs, I shall be delighted to go driving with them. Where is Blossom Banks, Uncle?"

"Oh, it's a lovely place, a sort of picnic ground; there are several grassy banks, and blossoms grow all over them. They slope right down to the river; but, of course, you wouldn't think them nearly so nice as a sloping barn roof."

Marjorie knew she must stand teasing from Uncle Steve, but his smile was so good-natured, and he was such a dear old uncle anyway, that she didn't mind it very much.

"Suppose I read another letter," she said, quite ready to turn the subject.

"Do; open that one with the typewritten address. I wonder who could have written that! Perhaps the cow; she's very agile on the typewriter."

The mental picture of the cow using the typewriter produced such hilarity that it was a few moments before the letter was

opened.

"It IS from the cow!" exclaimed Marjorie, "and she does write beautifully on the machine. I don't see a single error."

"Read it out, Midge; I always love to hear letters from cows."
So Marjorie read the cow's note:

"Mopsy Midge, come out to play;
I've waited for you all the day.
In the Garden and by the brook,
All day for you I vainly look.
With anxious brow and gaze intense
I lean against the old rail fence,
And moo and moo, and moo, and moo,
In hopes I may be heard by you.
And if I were not so forlorn,
I think I'd try to blow my horn.
Oh, come back, Midget, come back now,
And cheer your lonely, waiting

Cow."

"Now, that's a first-class letter," declared Uncle Steve. "I always thought that cow was a poet. She looks so romantic when she gazes out over the bars. You ought to be pleased, Marjorie, that you have such loving friends at Haslemere."

"Pleased! I'm tickled to death! I never had letters that I liked so well. And just think, I have three left yet that I haven't opened. I wonder who they can be from."

"When you wonder a thing like that, it always seems to me a good idea to open them and find out."

"I just do believe I will! Why, this one," and Marjorie hastily tore open another letter, "this one, Uncle, is from old Bet!"

"Betsy! That old horse! Well, she must have put on her spectacles to see to write it. But I suppose when she saw Ned and Dick writing, she didn't want them to get ahead of her, so she went to work too. Well, do read it, I'm surely interested to hear old Betsy's letter."

"Listen then," said Marjorie:

"DEAR LITTLE MIDGE:

I'm lonesome here,
Without your merry smiles to cheer.
I mope around the livelong day,
And scarcely care to munch my hay.
I am so doleful and so sad,
I really do feel awful bad!
Oh hurry, Midge, and come back soon;
Perhaps to-morrow afternoon.
And then my woe I will forget,
And smile again.

Your lonesome BET"

"Well, she is an affectionate old thing," said Uncle Steve; "and truly, Midget, I thought she was feeling lonesome this morning. She didn't seem to care to eat anything, and she never smiled at

me at all."

"She's a good old horse, Uncle, but I don't like her as much as I do Ned and Dick. But don't ever tell Betsy this, for I wouldn't hurt her feelings for anything."

"Oh, yes, just because Ned and Dick are spirited, fast horses you like them better than poor, old Betsy, who used to haul you around when you were a baby."

"Oh, I like her well enough; and, anyway, I think a heap more of her now, since she wrote me such an affectionate letter. Now, Uncle, if you'll believe it, this next one is from the chickens! Would you have believed that little bits of yellow chickens, in an incubator, could write a nice, clear letter like this? I do think it's wonderful! Just listen to it:

"DEAR MOPSY:

Why

Are you away?

We weep and cry

All through the day.

"Oh, come back quick,

Dear Mopsy Mop!

Then each small chick

Will gayly hop.

"We'll chirp with glee,

No more we'll weep;

Each chickadee
Will loudly peep."

"Well, that's certainly fine, Midget, for such little chickens. If it were the old hen, now, I wouldn't be so surprised, for I see her scratching on the ground every day. I suppose she's practising her writing lesson, but I never yet have been able to read the queer marks she makes. But these little yellow chickadees write plainly enough, and I do think they are wonderfully clever."

"Yes, and isn't it funny that they can rhyme so well, too?"

"It is, indeed. I always said those Plymouth Rocks were the smartest chickens of all, but I never suspected they could write poetry."

"And now, Uncle, I've only one left." Marjorie looked regretfully at the last letter, wishing there were a dozen more. "But I can keep them and read them over and over again, I like them so much. I'd answer them, but I don't believe those animals read as well as they write."

"No," said Uncle Steve, wagging his head sagely, "I don't believe they do. Well, read your last one, Mops, and let's see who wrote it."

"Why, Uncle, it's from the dogs! It's signed 'Nero and Tray and Rover'! Weren't they just darling to write to me! I believe I miss the dogs more than anything else, because I can have Puffy up here with me."

Marjorie paused long enough to cuddle the little heap of grey

fur that lay on the counterpane beside her, and then proceeded to read the letter:

"Dear Mopsy Midget,
We're in a fidget,
Because we cannot find you;
We want to know
How you could go
And leave your dogs behind you!

"We bark and howl,
And snarl and yowl,
And growl the whole day long;
You are not here,
And, Mopsy dear,
We fear there's something wrong!

"We haven't heard;
Oh, send us word
Whatever is the matter!
Oh, hurry up
And cheer each pup
With laughter and gay chatter."

"That's a very nice letter," said Marjorie, as she folded it up and returned it to its envelope. "And I do think the animals at Haslemere are the most intelligent I have ever known. Uncle, I'm going to send these letters all down home for King and Kitty to

read, and then they can send them back to me, for I'm going to keep them all my life."

"I'll tell you a better plan than that, Midget. If you want the children to read them, I'll make copies of them for you to send home. And then I'll tell you what you might do, if you like. When I go downtown I'll buy you a great big scrapbook, and then you can paste these letters in, and as the summer goes on, you can paste in all sorts of things; pressed leaves or flowers, pictures and letters, and souvenirs of all sorts. Won't that be nice?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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