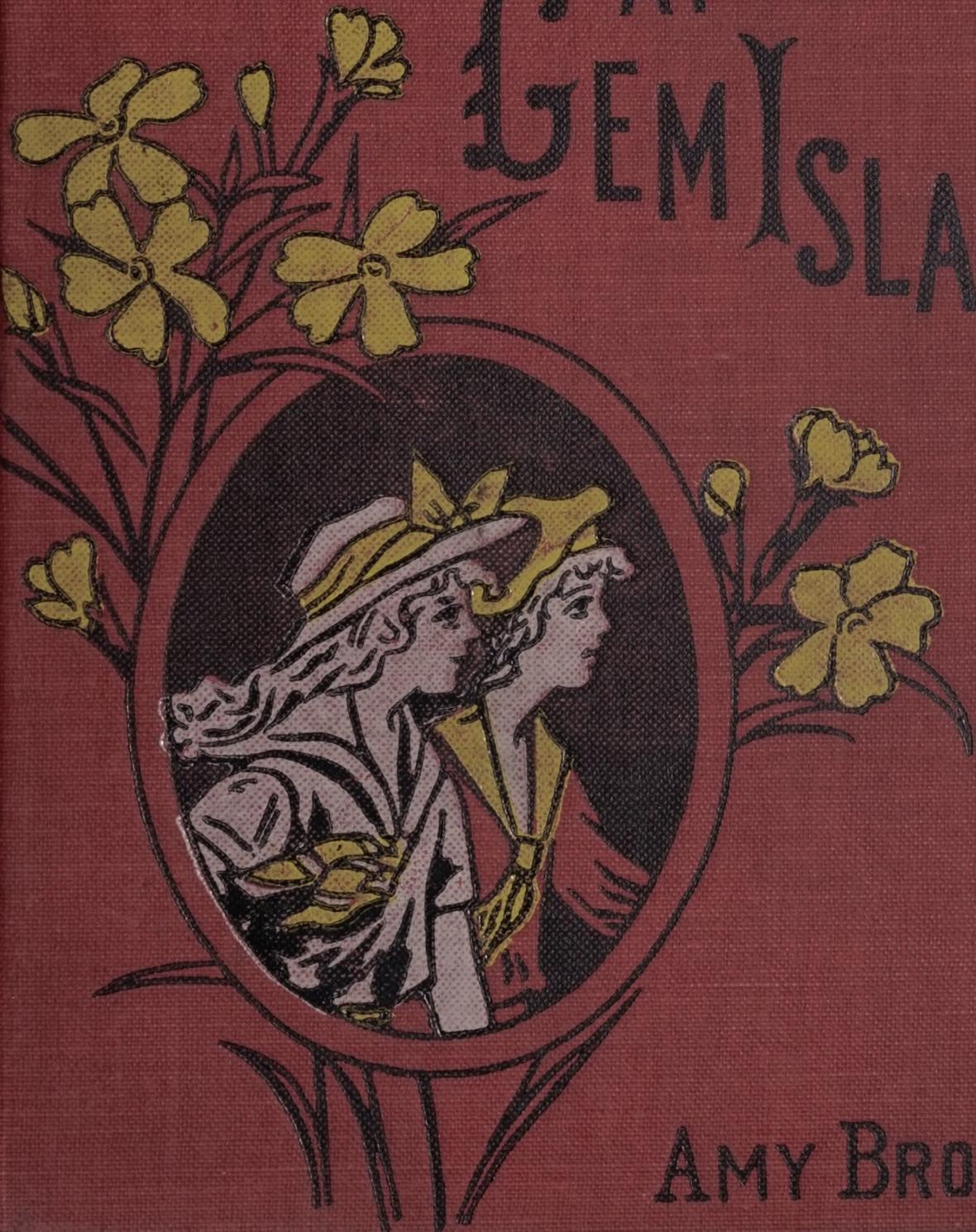


DOROTHY DAINTY
AT
GEM ISLAND



AMY BROOKS



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AROUND THEY FLEW IN A CIRCLE, LIGHT OF FOOT, AND LIGHT OF
HEART.—Page 109.

✓
DOROTHY DAINTY
AT GEM ISLAND

BY
AMY BROOKS
||

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR ✓



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DOROTHY DAINTY AT GEM ISLAND



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DOROTHY AT GEM ISLAND

CHAPTER I

A STARTLING HAPPENING

THE little waves danced and glistened in the sunlight as if golden spangles floated on their crests. One could hardly see where sky and ocean met, because a soft haze hung over the water away off there where the vessels looked so tiny as they moved slowly along.

Dorothy sat on the big ledge, waiting for Nancy, little Fluff close beside her.

At first the small dog had felt cosy, and content, but now he was becoming restless.

“Go find Nancy!” Dorothy said, and away he bounded, barking with delight when he saw her coming toward him.

“We’ve been here three days, and we haven’t yet seen all the lovely places on this dear little island. Its name just suits it. It is a gem!” said Nancy. “From here the two houses look like one big house, and the tall trees behind it are fine.”

“Flossie Barnet says that the salt air makes the flowers bright, and she told me that away over on the farther end of this island there are masses of little yellow wild-flowers, just yellow petals on slender stems,” said Dorothy.

“Oh, come on!” cried Nancy. “Let’s go and see if we can find them. Flossie has gone over to Foam Ridge in the little launch with Uncle Harry, but I guess we can find the place. She said it was a long walk from

here, along the beach, on the other end of this island."

"I truly think it would be twice as fine to go some day when we have Betty Chase over here, and then Flossie could show us just where it is, and we'd be a nice little party of four, instead of just us two," Dorothy said.

It did seem as if the pleasure would be greater if the four little friends were together, and when Flossie returned she, too, felt sure that Betty would be a gay companion on the long walk.

"Come up on the cliff, and we'll take turns reading the book that Uncle Harry just bought for me over at Foam Ridge. I mean, read it aloud so we can all be enjoying it at the same time," said Flossie, "and he gave me this box of bonbons, and we'll share that, too."

Dear little Flossie! Half of her delight

in her gifts was the joy of sharing them with her friends.

They climbed to the top of the cliff, and choosing a spot that was shaded by trees and shrubbery, they sat down to enjoy both book and candy.

The story was the old favorite, "Robinson Crusoe," new to Flossie, but Dorothy and Nancy had read it many times.

Each time that they had read it, its charm had seemed even stronger than before, so they did not tell Flossie that they already knew the tale, but commenced to read it, Dorothy reading first, then Nancy, then Flossie.

Often they paused to talk of what they had been reading, and it was not long before the book was half read, and the candy box empty. They had reached the page that told of Robinson's terror when, believing himself

to be the only person who had ever set foot upon the island, he discovered a human footprint on the sand.

A finely colored picture on the opposite page seemed to impress the little readers with the horror of Robinson's discovery.

"Oh—o—o!" cried Flossie, "no wonder he was scared! I'm sure I would have been as frightened as he!"

"So would we," cried Dorothy and Nancy, as if with one voice.

"And, Dorothy," Nancy said, "I do believe that story seems more real because we're now living on an island."

"Do you suppose we'd be startled if *we* saw a footprint on the sand?" said Flossie.

"A big one?" Dorothy asked.

"Oh—o," Nancy said slowly.

Dorothy turned to look at her, puzzled at the odd note in her voice.

“But we wouldn’t find a footprint like that,” said Flossie, who was still looking at the picture, “because that’s the print of a bare foot, and there’s only your family and ours on this little island—and—we don’t go barefoot.”

She laughed gaily, and tossed the book upon the grass.

“It’s a long story,” she said, “and I’m just a teenty bit scared now, so I guess we’ll read the rest of it another time.”

“Don’t you long to know who *had* been on that island to make that big footprint?” Dorothy asked.

“Yes, I do,” Flossie said, “but I don’t want to read it just now, for if I did, and any one should happen to come up behind me, I do think I’d jump right up and run, I’d be so scared!”

She picked up the book, and as the sun

was now directly overhead, they went down the rough steps that had been cut in the ledge, and walked along a little path that was shaded by tall shrubbery.

The salt breeze blew in from the sea, and it seemed cooler than when they had sat high up on the cliff.

They were still talking of the wonderful story, and of Robinson's great terror at what he had seen on the sand.

"Let's run a race, and see which one of us is first on the beach!" cried Flossie.

Nancy was ahead of the others, and laughing as she ran, and would soon have been out of reach, but suddenly she stopped, and stared down at the sand as if spellbound by what she saw.

There, on the sand before her, was the print of a foot, a bare foot, but oh, what a monstrous footprint it was! Flossie was

the first to reach her, as she stood looking down at that footprint, Nancy's face was white.

"What is it?" Dorothy asked as she ran toward them.

Flossie pointed at the footprint on the sand, and Dorothy looked, staring in amazement at its huge proportions. The three little friends were, at that moment, thinking the same thoughts.

For an instant they stood staring at it, and then, without a word, they turned and ran; ran as if their lives depended upon the speed that they could make.

"Everybody has gone *somewhere!*" cried Flossie. "Mother and Aunt Vera and Uncle Harry have gone over to Foam Ridge. They went just as soon as they'd brought me back here with my book and my box of candy."



OH, WHAT A MONSTROUS FOOTPRINT IT WAS!—Page 7.

“O dear! Mother went to the city with Aunt Charlotte this morning!” said Dorothy. “I *wish* they were home.”

“There’s John,” gasped Nancy, as she pointed toward a quaint figure bending over some fine rose-bushes. “Let’s get him!”

“Well, well, an’ it’s runnin’ ye are on a hot day loike this? Sure I’d think ye tree little ladies should sit in the shade an’ be cool loike,” said John, his eyes twinkling as he looked at the three eager faces.

“Oh, but John, we were so scared by what we saw down on the beach!” cried Dorothy, “and we rushed back to the house, and oh, I’m so glad you’re here.”

“Yes, because he may be hiding anywhere on this island!” added Nancy.

“And he must be a giant!” cried Flossie, “to have a foot like that!”

“Wot’s that? Do ye mane ter tell me ye

saw his *fut*, an' not himself? How can thot be? An who is he?"

"Oh, John, you're laughing," said Dorothy, "but it isn't a joke, and we didn't see him, or his feet either, but his footprint on the sand was just monstrous. You never saw anything like it."

"Oh, ho! It's a futprint, is it? An' tell me, now, how cud a futprint shcare ye? Ah, whisht! Miss Dorothy, I was only tasin' ye. Sure, it's mesilf will go over there, an' hov a look it the futprint. Which way do Oi shtart?"

"You go down the steps in the ledge, then turn to the right, and walk along the beach, and you'll see it, first thing. It's so big that you can't miss it."

"All roight," said John, "an' Oi'll arm mesilf, in case I hopen to foind the in-thruder, as well as his futprint," and picking

up his spade, he shouldered it, and started off toward the beach.

The three little friends, their arms about each other, looked eagerly at John's comical figure, and for a few moments neither spoke.

Even little Fluff, who had rushed across the lawn to greet them, stood looking after the gardener, his mouth open, his eyes eager, as if he fully understood all that had been said.

"O dear, John has gone to look for whoever is on this island, who—who—why, who ought not to be here, but I *do* hope nothing happens to John," said Dorothy, drawing closer to Nancy.

"Nobody but a giant could have such a foot as that, and there aren't any giants now," said little Flossie.

"But there was the footprint, such an awful footprint, too," wailed Nancy.

“If John finds a man big enough to have a foot like that, I don’t see what he could do with him. He isn’t big enough to send a giant off from this island. O dear, why did it happen when every one was away?” said Dorothy.

For a few moments they were silent, and then—well, such a jolly laugh they heard, and—why, surely it was John who was laughing!

“I don’t see how he can laugh,” said Flossie. “Would you think he could?” Before the others could reply, John came around from behind the heavy shrubbery, and following him, was Uncle Harry.

“I’m the giant! I’m the giant!” he shouted, “and now, little friends, what will you do to me?”

“He sure is the verra mon wot made the big futprint. Oh, ho, ha, ha!” agreed John.

“Why, Uncle Harry! How *could* you? Your feet aren’t anywhere near that size!” declared Flossie.

“I should hope not!” he cried. “Why there’s not a shoe in the country that’s half big enough to fill that footprint out there on the sand. I modeled that footprint with my hands, after hearing Flossie’s excited description of that part of Robinson Crusoe that tells of his surprise when he found the impress on the sand.

“Then I went in the launch over to Foam Ridge, and forgot all about the footprint I’d made. Why, how round your eyes were when you saw me coming! I thought John was joking when he said you were frightened.”

“Oh, but we *were!*” said Dorothy, “and so was John.”

“Aw, now, Miss Dorothy, how d’ye moike

that out?" said John, with a sheepish grin.

"You took your big spade with you," she replied.

"That's wot I did," agreed John, "but if Oi'd found a woild mon, the soize ter match that futprint, *twinty* fellers wid *twinty clubs* wouldn't have been more than wad hov been needed ter masther him."

They were laughing now, partly at John's droll statement, but largely from sheer relief.

No giant was tramping around the lovely little island, no intruder was anywhere in hiding.

"There's one thing I've always longed to have explained to me," said Uncle Harry, "and that is how the savage landed on one foot!"

"The book doesn't say that!" declared Flossie, her eyes round with surprise.

“Perhaps it does not exactly say that,” agreed Uncle Harry, “but it tells of but *one* footprint, and how on earth did the fellow land on one foot, and keep the other in the air until his tribesmen arrived in a boat and took him away?”

They were all laughing now; even tiny Fluff looked from one to the other, his mouth wide open as if he, too, were laughing at the thought of the acrobatic savage.

“An’ it’s mesilf didn’t tink o’ that, tho’ the futprint ye made, sor, was ’way up from the sea, where niver a wave could touch it, an’ no other wan at all besoid it! Tink o’ that, will yez?”

“Well, the great mystery is explained,” said Uncle Harry, “and I’m really sorry that I gave you such a genuine scare, for that was farthest from my intention. I thought you would laugh at my awkward attempt at

modeling, and at its enormous size.”

“If we’d not been thinking of the story I believe we’d have known that no ‘really, truly’ foot could have made it, but the story seemed so real, that we were excited, and we were ready to believe—oh, anything!”

“And weren’t we scared?” said Flossie, clinging to his arm. “Why, Uncle Harry, we felt as if the same thing had happened to us that happened to Robinson Crusoe, and *he* was frightened. The book says that he was.”

“And he was a *man*,” said Nancy, “and if he was so scared that his hair stood on end, why wouldn’t we be scared? We’re only just little girls, and we knew that Dorothy’s father was away, and you were over at Foam Ridge. That left only John here, and we had forgotten him.”

“I think I’ll go giant-hunting,” declared

Uncle Harry, rolling up his sleeves, and looking very fierce.

“Oh, you don’t have to,” said Flossie, “for now we know who made the footprint on the sand, we’re not frightened.”

“Well, all the same, I’m off for a giant-hunting trip. You never can tell when some huge fellow may be in hiding, and soon as I find a good, stout club, I’ll ‘sally forth, to corner him in his lair.’ I believe that is the way ‘Jack the Giant Killer’ did. I don’t think Jack did anything so ordinary as to ‘walk.’ I’m sure the story said he ‘sallied forth,’ so that is just what I’ll do.”

“Don’t forget to take a club,” Dorothy called after him.

“I’ve a baseball bat, and if I put a few long pointed nails or spikes in the end of it I think that will do,” he said, never relaxing the ponderous frown that he had assumed

when he first spoke of starting out on the search.

“Wouldn’t you think he meant every word he said?” asked Nancy. “I mean if we didn’t know how dearly he loves a joke.”

“Listen!” said Dorothy, laughing. “You’d sooner believe it if you didn’t hear that.”

He had slipped into the house, and now was singing, his wonderful voice giving new beauty to the old song:

“Out on the summer sea,
With light hearts glad and free,
Singing so joyously,
Happy are we.”

“Oh, don’t you love to hear him sing?” said Dorothy.

“Indeed I do,” said Nancy, who had been intently listening, “and he is always so willing to sing whenever any one asks him to.”

They heard him, afterward, playing the melody with brilliant variations, then, while they waited to learn if another song were to follow, he left the piano and appeared on the porch.

“I forgot to tell you, little friends, that I met Miss Geraldine this morning. I am sure you remember Geraldine— H’m, what is her name? Lugmore? Tagmore? No,—Togmore. That’s the name. Geraldine Togmore, and she told me that she was at Foam Ridge for the summer. ‘Tell Dorothy and Nancy that I’m coming over to see them soon,’ she said. ‘Auntie bought me a little launch, and I’m learning to run it. Just as soon as I’ve learned how to start it when it doesn’t want to start, and to stop it when it doesn’t want to stop, I’m coming over to call.’”

“Oh, I do wish she wouldn’t,” said Doro-

thy, adding: "I don't suppose that sounds very nice, but she's so hard to please."

"It may take her a long time to learn to run the launch," Nancy said so hopefully that it made Uncle Harry laugh.

CHAPTER II

THE SEA KING

ALL day the waves had glistened, sparkling as if the sunlight made them merry, but now, at late afternoon, the sky was overcast and over the sea hung a heavy fog, so that only the vessels near shore were visible.

“I do believe that fog gets thicker every minute,” Dorothy said, as she stood on the porch, and looked out across the water.

“And you had meant to enjoy some fine games with Nancy before dinner,” Mrs. Dainty said, as she drew Dorothy closer.

“Look off there where a point of land makes out into the sea. Those fishermen are beaching their boat. Only a short time ago

they were setting out for a fishing-trip, but those men are weather-wise, and they know that with a sky like that, the land is safer than the sea. It is now nearly five o'clock, so if it had been sunny, you would have had but an hour for play, but I have thought of a way in which you and Nancy can enjoy the whole evening, so let it storm if it will. Before a blazing fire of driftwood we'll spend the evening with the Sea King!"

"Oh, that sounds lovely, Mother, but is it a game? How do we spend the evening with him?" Dorothy asked.

"That is my secret until after dinner," Mrs. Dainty said, smiling.

"Oh, then I'll be glad there's such a good excuse for staying in," cried Dorothy.

"Nancy! Nancy! Come here a minute, please! We're to spend the evening with the Sea King!"

The wind was rising, and the rattling blinds and flapping awnings made such a noise that Nancy did not clearly catch the words.

“Spend the evening *seeking*?” she asked, “or did you say ‘peeking’?”

“Oh, Nancy! I didn’t say ‘Seeking,’ I said ‘Sea King,’” Dorothy explained, laughing as she thought what a rollicking game it would be, down there on the little island *peeking* at nothing at all, for all there was to be seen was the clump of beautiful trees, flat land with ledges, a strip of beach, and the rain coming down in torrents. Their house faced Foam Ridge and the body of water that cut the island off from the mainland, while from the back window of the house one could look far out to sea.

During dinner the storm had increased, and when they returned to the living-room

the warmth and glow from the crackling fire was most welcome. The light from the dancing flames cast a warmer glow over the crimson hangings that the maid had carefully drawn across the windows to shut out the storm.

“And now we will begin to get acquainted with the Sea King,” Mrs. Dainty said, as she seated herself in her low, reed chair before the fire.

Dorothy and Nancy, crouching upon cushions at her feet, looked up at her with sparkling eyes.

“What is his name?” Dorothy asked.

“Neptune was his name, King Neptune, and the ancients actually believed that there really was such a person. They gave him his name, and said that his palace was on the ocean’s bed.

“They described him as a sturdy old fel-

low with a snowy beard, and waving hair of the same hue.

“In their sculptures, he wears a crown, and in his hand, instead of a scepter, he carries a trident.

“I remember a picture that I once saw in a famous collection of fine paintings, where old Neptune was riding in his golden chariot along the crest of the waves, attended by a band of sea nymphs.”

“It’s a pretty story, but how *could* people believe it?” Dorothy asked.

“The people who believed in these myths, or tales, were pagans, not knowing our Heavenly Father, but instead, worshipping many gods, among them, Neptune. They thought that he ruled the waves, and when their boats were tossed about in a storm, they believed that something that they had done had angered him. If they could think of

any act that might have enraged him, they fell upon their knees and implored his forgiveness, but if they could not decide what had so aroused his wrath, they then decided that he wished to be more fervently worshipped, and as soon as the storm was lulled, they would go down to the shore with huge quantities of fruits and flowers, and these they would offer to him with great ceremony. Then the fruit and flowers were tossed out upon the waves, and if the storm did not return they felt that King Neptune's anger was assuaged, and their offering graciously accepted."

"Oh, what a lovely story!" cried Dorothy. "Let's just '*play*' we believe it, because the sea will look finer, grander, if we pretend that 'way, 'way down below the waves King Neptune rules in his palace."

Mrs. Dainty laughed.

“There is surely no harm in ‘playing’ that King Neptune rules an under-ocean realm if it amuses you. Come, we’ll draw the red hangings and look out and see if the old fellow is still in a temper.”

She rose and crossed the room to the window that looked out across the sea. As she drew aside the curtains, the children gave little cries of surprise. The rain no longer lashed the windows, and overhead, scudding clouds were flying across the sky in great, ragged masses.

“Why, it has stopped raining!” said Nancy. “We can play now that the old Sea King is not in quite such a temper as he was.”

“Oh, he’s behaving better,” said Dorothy, “but just hear the wind blowing. He’s not pleasant yet.”

“I should think not!” agreed Nancy. “for

look at those clouds that are flying across the sky.”

“You can ‘make believe’ that the wind that now whistles around the corner is the music of his nymphs. They are nearly always represented as his attendants when he rides the waves in his chariot, and each of the nymphs carries a conch-shell upon which she is blowing,” Mrs. Dainty said.

“Nobody could sing the tune they are playing,” said Nancy.

“But it might be just what the Sea King would think was lovely music,” Dorothy said, and for a time, with Nancy’s arm about her, she stood listening to the whistling gale.

Later, they lay in bed, talking of the Sea King and his nymphs, so it was small wonder that in their dreams they saw old Father Neptune with his trident.

“What do you think I dreamt?” Dorothy

asked, when the two were dressing the next morning.

“I dreamt of lovely sea nymphs, and I, too, was a nymph, and we were all floating in and out among the foam and spray, blowing on our conch-shells and having such a fine time.”

“Well, I wasn’t having such fun in my dreams,” said Nancy, “for I thought the Sea King was chasing me along the crest of the waves, and shouting to his attendants:

“‘Catch her! Catch her!’ and all the time I was swimming away from him as fast as I could.”

After breakfast they ran down to the little beach. Along the sandy shore were evidences of the storm that had swept over the little island. Branches that the gale had torn from the trees lay everywhere in sight, blossoms and foliage from the wild shrub-

bery, and shells of all sizes had been flung upon the sand by the angry waves. Long strings of seaweed lay among the shells, and clinging to it were bits of fine sea moss.

“Oh, Nancy, look at the shells and seaweed! I guess the old Sea King is sorry that he showed such an awful temper last night, and he’s sent these pretty things up on the shore to make us think that he was only playing after all,” said Dorothy.

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” she continued, laughing as she spoke. “We’ll go over toward the ledge where the wild rosebushes are, and get some of the blossoms and buds, and with some of this seaweed, we’ll weave a long garland.

“When it is made, we’ll put on our bathing-suits, and run down to where the waves are washing in. We’ll toss the garland out on the water, and we’ll say we take that

way to show old Neptune that we forgive him."

"Oh, that will be fun, because we can play we are little pagans like those your mother told about last night, and you'll be making an offering," Nancy said.

"I'll not fling any fruit with it, because he needn't expect fruit when he was so angry and unpleasant," said Dorothy.

"*Fruit!*" said Nancy in disgust. "He shook our house till it rattled last night, and seemed as if trying to pull our lovely trees up by the roots. I wouldn't want to throw him nice oranges or apples. He doesn't deserve them. I'd sooner throw him an *onion!*"

"Oh, Nancy! Such an *offering!*" cried Dorothy.

"Well, such a *temper!* I should say!" said Nancy, and the two laughed gaily.

However, they made the garland, and Dorothy remembered an old song that her mother had taught her.

Very lovely she looked as she sang the pretty melody, the while with arms extended, she made her offering to the Sea King.

“Restless wavelets of the sea,
For the shells you’ve given me,
I will give sweet flowers to you.
Come and take them, quickly, do.

“Gliding swiftly o’er the sand,
You can take them from my hand,
And I tell you, it is true,
They’re my loving gift to you.”

“Look! Look! The waves are coming for our garland,” Dorothy cried, “and each one has a finer crest than the one before it.”

“Oh—o! There it goes back again, but each one comes a bit nearer,” said Nancy, as she crouched upon the sand to watch the incoming tide.



WITH ARMS EXTENDED, SHE MADE HER OFFERING TO THE SEA KING.

Page 32.

“Well, I wonder if old Neptune doesn’t think this offering fine enough?” said Dorothy.

“He knows that garland of flowers and seaweed is lovely,” Nancy said, “and I’ll tell you one thing, there’s really no such person as King Neptune, so I’m not afraid to call him what I choose!”

“Why Nancy Ferris! What *could* you call him?” Dorothy asked.

Nancy laughed.

“If he comes for the offering soon, I’ll continue to call him ‘King Neptune,’ but if he is too slow about it, I’ll just call him ‘Old Neppy,’ if he is the king of the ocean, and see how he likes that.”

“I wonder how you’ll manage to ‘see,’” Dorothy said, but just at that moment a big roller came washing up, ducking the little holder of the offering, and taking the long

string of flowers and seaweed along on its crest as it receded.

“He took it! He took it!” cried Dorothy, dancing up and down.

“Hurrah for the Sea King!” shouted Nancy. “May he keep away from this island for weeks to come!”

“Oh, I’d not care how often he came if he was feeling pleasant, and just riding along on the waves with his lovely nymphs floating beside him, but he needn’t splash up against our big ledges, or tear the branches off our trees. It’s a pretty fairy tale, and I like to hear all such lovely things, of mermaids, and mermen,” Dorothy concluded, looking out across the water.

“I wonder what kept his chariot going?” queried Nancy.

“I never thought of that?” said Dorothy.

“Let’s ask mother. She saw the big picture of Neptune and his nymphs.”

Up the beach they raced, around the edge, across the lawn, and just in time to see a nimble figure bounding toward them.

“Why, Vera Vane! I could hug you this minute if I weren’t so wet. I’ve just been drenched by a big wave,” cried Dorothy.

“I don’t care if you are wet!” replied Vera, and, impulsive as ever, she threw her arms about Dorothy.

“This woolen sailor-suit doesn’t mind salt water and neither do I. Oh, but I’m glad to be here! And Nancy, darling, I’ll just hug you, too. Oo—what a long trip it was to get here!” Vera said.

“Such a surprise!” cried Dorothy.

“I knew you’d both enjoy Vera, and I wrote to Mrs. Vane a week before we left the

stone house, asking her to be sure to let us have her little daughter for a time at Gem Island, and here she is, a fine surprise for you and Nancy."

"And for me," said Vera, "for Mother never told me until two days ago. On that day I said, 'I'd like some sort of surprise. I'd like to do something that I didn't know I was going to do,' and Mother said, 'Well, that is what you are about to do. On Wednesday you start for Gem Island to enjoy a little visit with Dorothy and Nancy.' Wasn't I surprised?"

"Of course you were, and the surprise of it is part of the fun," said Dorothy.

"Did you come all the way alone?" Nancy asked.

"Oh, no indeed," said Vera, "but guess who brought me?"

"How could we ever guess?" said Flossie

Barnet, who had caught sight of Vera, and had come to greet her, "but *I* wouldn't have to guess, because I just found out."

"I'll tell," Vera said, laughing. "My father took the train-ride with me, and Flossie's Uncle Harry was waiting at the pier with his launch."

"And then you sailed, and sailed, and here you are," said Flossie.

"An' here you *is*," said little Elfin, who had followed Flossie.

"And here I *is*!" echoed Vera, laughing as she knelt to draw the little girl closer.

"Do you remember me, Elfin?" she asked, looking down into the lovely little face.

"Yes, oh, yes," said Elfin. "I do 'member you. You made hats for my dollies, fine hats with *feaders* on 'em. Will you make sings for my dollies *dis* time?"

"Oh, you little coaxer! Of course I will,"

cried Vera, and Elfin, freeing herself, ran off across the lawn singing a funny little tune, the words floating back on the breeze:

“Of tourse see will,
Of tourse see will.
O my! I’m glad see tum.”

“The very first rainy day I’ll sit down and sew for her dolls, just because she is so dear and cunning,” said Vera. “And oh, Dorothy! *Isn’t* this island wonderful? As we sailed toward it, it certainly looked like a lovely island with a castle on it, such as we’ve read of in our fairy tales.”

“And it seems to us like a Fairy island, for the houses are joined by that high gallery, and from the tower we can look out over the water, so that no one could land at our little pier without being seen by us, and we can roam from one end of the island to the other.”

CHAPTER III

QUICKSANDS

VERA was out on the lawn before either Dorothy or Nancy was awake, but she was not alone. Little Fluff had heard her footsteps on the stairway, and had greeted her with little yelps of delight. He always found it very hard to keep quiet in the early morning, and seemed to think that the entire household should be up and about as soon as his bright little eyes were open.

Here was a wide-awake girl coming down the stairway.

“Sh! Sh! Be still!” Vera said, and at her uplifted finger, he paused, then emitted a soft little “Wow!”

Softly she opened the door, and Fluff promptly rushed between her feet in his eagerness to get out.

“You almost tripped me,” said Vera, as she closed the door, “and if you had made me fall, we’d have made a fine noise.”

Fluff looked as if he were sorry, and Vera, whispering “Come on!” ran from the porch out onto the lawn, where she sat down, and ordered him to “Sit up like a little man,” which he promptly did.

Erect he posed, his eyes eager to see how soon her hand would draw a bonbon from her pocket.

Dorothy had taught him to sit up, by rewarding him with candy.

Vera did not know that, so when Fluff, disgusted that she had no treat to offer, began to bark loudly, she wondered what it was that he wanted.

“Be quiet!” she said, shaking her forefinger at him. “Do you want to wake every one in the house?”

“Wow!” said Fluff.

“Well, you just *needn't*, you noisy little fellow,” she replied.

It was not long before Dorothy and Nancy ran down to join her on the lawn, and after breakfast they showed Vera the long gallery that connected the two houses, which on rainy days made it possible for the neighbors to visit without going out-of-doors.

They took her up into the tower, and let her look far out to sea. Shielding her eyes with her hand, she looked off to where on the horizon white-sailed vessels moved slowly along. Her eyes brightened.

“The white sails are lovely,” she said, “but this island is lovely, too. And tell me,” she said, after a second. “Wouldn't

you think it fun to start out and just tramp and tramp, we three, until we come to the other end of this island. The *tip* end, I mean? We could play we're discoverers, for we'd be sure to discover *something* on a long walk like that."

"We'll do it," said Dorothy, "and whether we really discover anything or not, we'll surely have a fine walk."

"And I wouldn't wonder if we found the yellow blossoms that Flossie told us grew in the wiry grass somewhere on this island," Nancy said.

They were soon on their way, little Fluff stopping whenever they stopped, and looking at whatever, for the moment, had caught their attention, then racing ahead with excited barking, when they were once more on their way.

"I'll tell you a fine bit of news, Vera,"

Dorothy said. "Betty Chase is here, I mean over at Foam Ridge, and you always liked Betty."

"I did like Betty," Vera said, "and I thought she was one of the dearest girls at Glenmore."

"Well, Betty is just as dear now as when we were all schoolmates at Glenmore," said Nancy, "and I hope, if she's coming over to-day, she'll wait till we get back. I want to see her just as soon as I can."

"She said whenever she came over she'd *surely* be there by half-past eight, and it was after nine when I ran in to get this basket full of lunch," said Dorothy.

"Lunch!" cried Vera, stopping short in the middle of the road. "Lunch, did you say? Why, Dorothy Dainty! Do you think we'll be tramping all day?"

Nancy laughed at the comic look of amaze-

ment on Vera's face, but Dorothy answered, quietly:

"It's a long walk to the end of this island, and that's where you said you'd like to go."

"This island is long and narrow, Vera," said Nancy. "It isn't much of a walk from one shore to the other if you cross it from the beach at the back of our house to the cliff in front that looks toward Foam Ridge."

"Now, girls!" said Vera, "I know it's narrow across that way, and I know another thing about this island, and that is that up in the tower where we stood looking out, it didn't look so *very* far to the *tip end* of Gem Island, and I don't believe it is. Why, we ought to be there in almost no time!"

"It may take us a bit longer than no time," Nancy said, laughing because Vera was so positive, "but we'll not get there at all if we don't start, so come on!"

“Hurrah!” cried Vera. “We’ll walk and walk until we have to stop because we don’t intend to tramp right into the sea! We mean to see the very tip, *tip* end of Gem Island!”

A cool breeze was blowing, and they tripped along, singing little snatches of song.

No one paid much attention to what the others were singing until after a pause when all were silent Vera sang a most surprising verse, that seemed to be rather a close description of herself:

“Just a restless elf am I,
Tra, la, *la!* Tra, la, *lo!*
You can’t catch me if you try!
Tra, la, *la, la, lo!*
Some have tried to capture me,
How I vanish they can’t see,
They search earth and air for me,
Hunting high and low.”

“Oh, Vera! that song is like you, and you

are laughing. I do believe you know those words describe you.”

Vera's eyes were twinkling. The breeze was tossing her curling flaxen hair, and she laughed as she bounded along.

“You can't catch me if you try,” she sang, and suiting the action to the words, she raced ahead, the other two running with all their might, hoping to overtake her.

Seeing that they were gaining in speed, and that they soon would reach her, Vera dodged, and running to the edge that bordered the sea at that point, she looked back at them, laughing, dancing up and down, perilously near the edge of the ledge.

“Want to see me jump off, and go *splash* down into the water?” she cried. “Want to? Want to?”

“No, no!” they shouted. “Come here, Vera, come back before you fall off!”

“Pooh! ’Tisn’t much of a jump,” she answered, “but of course I won’t if you don’t care to see me do it. What is the use of getting drenched for no reason at all?”

“Oh, I was so frightened,” Dorothy said, when Vera was once more walking along beside them.

Vera threw loving arms around Dorothy, and held her close.

“You darling goosie!” she cried. “Did either you or Nancy really think I’d jump off from that cliff, and ’way, ’way down where those waves are going splash, bang against those rocks?”

Dorothy did not speak, for a moment, but she looked at Vera with eyes that plainly showed how frightened she had been.

It was Nancy who spoke.

“I didn’t truly think you’d dare to jump,” she said, “but I was sure you’d fall off. You

were too near the edge of the rocks to be hopping first on one foot, and then the other."

"I'd not be afraid to do it again," Vera said; "but just look there! Yellow flowers, lovely little yellow flowers, masses of them!"

"Those must be the very ones that Flossie told us about," said Dorothy.

The lovely blossoms grew on slender stems with buds and a number of flowers on each stem.

It was quite a task to gather them because they grew amidst the coarse, wiry grass, and they endeavored to pick the flower stalks with not a blade of the grass to mar their beauty.

So busy were they that for a time they forgot to talk.

Little Fluff was chasing the butterflies that hovered over the flowers, and barking

because they wouldn't wait for him to catch them.

It was Vera who first spoke. She had risen from the spot where she had been crouching, and was walking slowly over the grass to where a large mass of the blossoms were blowing in the breeze.

"I was just wondering if this island could possibly be the very same island that Father sailed out to inspect one time. The island that he told us about was just a little trip from the shore, like this one, and there were lovely flowers on it.

"Oh, but there was a funny thing about that little island! Right in the middle of it there was a place that looked fine, but it was really, truly quicksands!

"Did you hear what I said?" she asked, for the first time pausing to look up.

"Quicksands! Quicksands! And right

in the middle of that island!" she declared, springing to her feet, her eyes sparkling with excitement. It happened that neither Dorothy nor Nancy had even heard the word, "quicksand," so while Dorothy looked toward Vera, and wondered why she seemed excited, Nancy only laughed.

"I never heard of quicksand," she said, "I wonder if there's any such thing as *slow sand*?"

"Well, I know one thing, Nancy Ferris, as sure as sure can be, and that is, if this *is* the island where my father saw quicksands—"

Vera paused to learn if they were interested.

"If it *is* the same island," she repeated. "Then whoever happens to be on the spot where the quicksand place *is*, is going to go *plunk* when the quicksands go *plunk*. Isn't that easy to see?"

Her listeners were more than interested now; they were startled.

“Well, you needn’t be scared, because this *may* not be the island, but my father said that—”

Nancy sprang to her feet.

“You’re frightening us more by just telling part of what you father said,” she cried. “Now tell us just what he *did* say.”

“Well, he said on that island that he visited the quicksand was sort of like a bog, and the sailor that rowed him over to it told him all about it.

“The sailor said that one time a fisherman was driving a horse and tip-cart across that island, and he started to cross the place where the quicksand was, only he didn’t know it was quicksand, and he, and horse and cart went right down, down, when the bog, no I mean quicksand, began to let them

down plunk, and they had to get ropes, and haul and haul with all their might to keep them from being drawn down in the sand so they'd be out of sight!"

"Oh, Vera, that's frightful!" said Dorothy, whose eyes had opened wider and wider as the tale progressed.

"And the funny thing about it is that if it is this island, we might this very minute, be standing on sand that is solid, and just a bit farther, front, or side, or back of us might be the quicksand that lets you go just the way the man and cart did."

"I wish you hadn't told us," said Dorothy. "Truly I'm afraid to step."

"Why, I think it's twice as much fun to think that maybe this island is safe, and that maybe it isn't. I like to take a few steps, and see if I begin to slump! I almost thought I did just a minute ago."

“You see it’s that you can’t be *sure* that makes the fun. If this is the island my father went to one time, then the house might go out of sight some day before any one from Foam Ridge could get here to save it, and maybe before any one had even noticed it, and then folks on the beach would wonder where the house had gone.”

“Oh, Vera, I truly do wish—”

“Oh, pooh!” cried Vera. “Didn’t I say ‘maybe this isn’t the same island’?”

A sharp bark from Fluff made them turn.

Far across the patch of coarse grass and yellow flowers they saw him. He was barking and whining as if he were hurt, and he made no effort to come when they called. Always quick to come bounding toward Dorothy at her first call, he now refused to do so.

With a wild cry of “The quicksands!”

Dorothy, snatching off her hat, raced at top speed to save him, never a thought of fear for her own safety entering her curly head.

In chasing butterflies he had raced in every direction, and now, held fast by a bramble, was unable to free himself. The briars had a firm hold on his fluffy coat, for which he had been named, and Dorothy found it a task to liberate her pet.

When he was freed from the briars, Dorothy took him in her arms, and started to return the way that she had come, then she stopped, looked back to Nancy, who was watching her, and both laughed. Laughed with sheer relief, for if Dorothy could race across that spot to rescue Fluff when she supposed that he was about to actually sink out of sight, it was quite likely that she could return safely, and gaily she ran toward them.

“Where’s the quicksand?” she said, laughing at the droll expression on Vera’s face.

“Well, didn’t I say it *might* be, and it might *not*?” Vera said.

“And to think,” said Nancy, “if Dorothy hadn’t been so eager to save Fluff from the quicksands that she forgot all about herself, we’d have been standing here, no one knows how long, neither of us daring to stir a foot.”

“But don’t you like to be scared?” Vera asked. “I do,” she continued. “Part because I just *do* like to, and part because after you’ve had a big scare it seems so good to know you’re safe, but I’ll tell you one thing. I mean to try to think, when I go to bed, that maybe the house will go plunk in the night, not sure, you know, but just *may* be!”

“Oh, Vera!” cried Dorothy.

“ ’Twould be just *fine!*” cried Vera, “and then I could play be surprised to-morrow morning when I found the house hadn’t budged an inch!”

“Vera,” said Nancy, “did you ever wonder how that man you told about got his tip-cart over onto that little island?”

“Or where the men with ropes came from, just in time to save him?” Dorothy asked.

“What funny questions!” cried Vera.

“Why, when you hear stories like that, you mustn’t ask how this happened or how that could be because you just spoil a good story, and anyway, my father said he didn’t believe it. He said it was just a sailor’s yarn, but I told it to you, because I *do* think it’s great fun to be just a bit scared. It’s so exciting not to know if you are standing on land that is safe or on sand that is just about nothing at all. Oo—but we did wonder!”

CHAPTER IV

A RAINY DAY

WELL, whoever dreamed it would be a rainy day, and if it must rain, who'd have guessed it would just simply pour?" said Vera, as she stood looking out from the window in the tower room.

"Never mind," Dorothy said "We can have fun indoors."

"And we will," agreed Nancy.

"We'll make it such a jolly day that you'll forget it storms."

"Oh, you two are so dear, I could have a good time with you wherever we were," Vera said quickly, "but it is so lovely here that I want to be out-of-doors every minute."

"Mother says if she had gone over to Foam

Ridge yesterday as she intended, we would have had some bonbons. Now we must wait for them until this storm is over."

"Dorothy and I, on a stormy day, choose a book that we both like, and we sit in the hammock with a big box of candy between us, and read and read until the rain is over," said Nancy.

"While we read we forget it is raining," Dorothy added.

"S'pose it rains all day, would you read all day?" Vera asked.

"We couldn't," Dorothy said, with a laugh, "because Fluff comes and barks at us, and coaxes us to play with him."

"Wish I could bark," Vera said, with a sober face.

"Why, Vera Vane!" cried Dorothy.

"What an idea!"

"Oh, I'd only wish that if you and Nancy

started to read *all* day," Vera replied.

"We wouldn't think of doing that when you are here, Vera," Dorothy said.

"How could you think we would?"

"Oh, I know that," said Vera, "I was only thinking I'd rather we three would be racing 'round, I mean I'd enjoy that better than reading."

Vera, standing near the window, wished that some one was in sight on the island.

Dorothy and Nancy were trying to think of some way of amusing Vera that would be so lively that she would enjoy it.

A moment later she made them laugh.

"Do come and look out! Here's some one coming who isn't afraid of getting wet. My! But he's truly the handsomest boy I ever saw!"

"That's Antony Marx," said Dorothy, "and he certainly is good-looking."

“Why, how did he come to this island?” was the next question.

“In his own boat,” Nancy said, Dorothy adding, “It’s a fine one, named *The Shell*, and this is the first time he has come over here this season. When we were at Foam Ridge, he often took us out in his boat. Father says he’s a fine oarsman and an honest, manly fellow.”

Antony had made the trip to learn if it were true that Dorothy and Nancy were at Gem Island, and he had chosen a rainy day because he knew that if they were there, they would surely be up at the house. They ran to the door to greet him, Vera close behind them.

Antony felt rather shy when he was introduced to Vera.

He wondered if her bright eyes were mocking, or only merry. While Dorothy

and Nancy were chatting with Antony, Vera was thinking very fast.

Here was surely a chance for a lark! Antony would not come in, declaring himself to be too wet and dripping, but he promised to choose a fair day and come over to take them out in *The Shell*.

“I’ll row you around your own island, and let you see how fine it looks from all sides,” he said as he went down the path.

“Why, where is Vera?” Dorothy said, for as they turned from the door they were surprised that she was not in sight.

“I thought she was there at the door with us,” Nancy said.

“She’s run off up to her room,” said a maid who was passing through the hall, “I see her go while you was talking to the lad. Like enough she thought of something she wanted, and ran up-stairs to get it.”

After waiting for Vera to appear, they called to her, but received no reply, nor was there a sound as of some one moving about.

“She’s hiding just for fun, and wants us to find her,” Dorothy said.

“And if we wait a moment longer she’ll come running out. Don’t you know Vera never can remain hidden when we play hide-and-seek?”

“I know it,” Nancy said, laughing as she thought how often Vera had been caught, just because she could not keep out of sight.

And still there was no sound as if Vera were moving about up in her room.

“I’ll run up and see why she stays so long,” Nancy said.

But Vera was not in her room.

When appealed to, Mrs. Dainty smiled, and put a loving arm about each eager little girl, saying:

“Vera loves dearly to hide in a place where she thinks you cannot find her. Soon we shall hear her calling to us to find her, or yet more likely, she will rush out at us when we pass her hiding-place. Come! We’ll walk through the house and see how soon we find her.”

There came no sound from Vera, and when the maid, Sue, had searched her room, she returned with the surprising news that Vera’s hat and coat were not in her closet.

“She must have gone out. The wild little thing, to venture out in a pelting rain like this, ma’am,” said Sue, “and might I be sending John to get her in before she’s soaked to the skin?”

“That is a good idea, Sue, but I’ll speak to John myself,” Mrs. Dainty said, well knowing that John would take the order to go out on the search in the storm, with better feel-

ing, if kindly asked to do so by his mistress than if told to do so by Sue.

“Sure, Oi’ll go, an’ willin’, ma’am, if it’s yersilf or Miss Dorothy is anxious, but if it was mesilf as was missin’ Miss Vera, Oi’d *let* her git soaked, aye an’ soaked *trough*, at that, an’ mebbe it ud hov the effect o’ tamin’ her a bit.”

Mrs. Dainty knew that John’s view of Vera’s careless act might be just, but she felt that while Vera was her guest, she must have a care over her, lest the little girl suffer from the effect of her own careless acts.

She wished that Vera would be considerate, and refrain from doing things that made anxious moments for her friends.

And while John plodded along the soggy road, across fields, and sodden meadows, grumbling all the way over the “crazy woildness of *somefolks’s* children,” while the

household was upset, and Dorothy pale and anxious, where was Vera?

Never dreaming that she caused anxiety, Vera tramped along the beach at Foam Ridge, her small twinkling eyes full of fun.

Having raced up-stairs to her room, as Sue had said, she had snatched her wraps, and, letting herself out of the side door, had followed Antony down to where his boat was waiting for him.

He had promptly agreed to row Vera over to Foam Ridge, but when he had said, "You'll wet your feet getting to the boat, and they'll stay wet because there's water in the boat, and I've nothing to bail it out with," she quickly answered:

"Oh, I don't mind that! I'd not care, because there's an errand that I have to do."

"All right, come along," Antony had said, and he had rather enjoyed her company.

“How will you go back?” he asked, with a teasing laugh.

“Why, you’ll take me back,” Vera had replied with a saucy smile. “You’ll *like* to, you know you will,” and Antony had readily agreed. “I’m to do an errand,” Vera said, “and it truly won’t take me long.” She left Antony, and trudged along the beach.

The wind fairly blew Vera along. She was obliged to hold her hat, and she laughed when she thought of the fine surprise that she had in store for Dorothy and Nancy.

“Candy and oh-oo! The other thing! They’d never guess,” she said aloud, not caring at all that the wind blew harder, or that the rain was coming down heavier than before. She was singing now, a verse of her favorite song:

“Let it rain or let it shine,
Tra, la, *la!* Tra, la, *lo!*”



THE WIND FAIRLY BLEW VERA ALONG.—Page 66.

Merry is this heart of mine,
Tra, la, *la*, la, *lo*!
Tripping gayly here and there,
Dancing, flitting, earth or air,
Pranks or frolic, not a care,
On my way I go."

For the moment, Vera had forgotten everything but her own delight in being out in the gale instead of indoors. She had even forgotten why she had rushed out into the storm, and to the boy who sat waiting for her to return she gave never a thought.

It did not occur to her that she should hasten, and with a firm grasp on her hat-brim, she sauntered along. It was when she remembered her errands that she began to hasten. Indeed, she ran then.

"Don't seem like Mrs. Dainty to send her out on a day like this to do an errand," Antony muttered, "and I told Father I'd come right back. Gee! I hope she comes along

soon. Father'll be mad, and I can't explain. I'll not tell him 'twas a *girl* that kept me. He'd sure laugh at me, and I can't stand that. Whew! I wish she'd hurry." After what seemed like endless waiting, he spied Vera coming toward him, but making slow progress, for now, returning, she was walking against the wind.

She had a square package, and a long, rather bulky bundle.

"That's candy," she said, gleefully, as she pointed to the square parcel, "and this one is, oh, it is likely to blow up any minute!"

"Then give it to me and I'll put it down into the puddle in the bottom of the boat. If it's soaked it *can't* blow up," said Antony.

"No, no!" cried Vera, "I don't want it soaked," and she hugged it closer, as if she feared that the laughing boy would take it

from her, and place it, as he had said, in the bottom of the boat.

Vera laughed, and began singing the elfin song that so delighted her, and Antony forgot how angry he had been while waiting for her to return.

It was much harder to row out to Gem Island than it had been to row away from it, for now the tide had turned and Antony was doing his best to row against it.

It was a rough trip, and the little boat was tossed about on the waves. They were drenched with spray, but even when great waves broke over the boat, threatening to engulf them, Vera did not pause in her singing.

“Vera, are you actually fearless?” cried the boy, wondering if his passenger did not realize their danger of being capsized.

She only tossed her head, and continued to sing, smiling as she sang:

“Prank or frolic, not a care,
On my way I go.”

It was not until she stood on the sand beside him, when they had at last reached the island, that Antony understood her, and he actually gasped with amazement.

The flighty-appearing girl had been braver than he had dreamed.

“You asked me if I was fearless,” she said. “Antony, I was scared all the way, and I wondered if we’d ever reach this island, but I kept on singing. I wanted to help you, but there were no other oars, and if there had been, I couldn’t have used them, so instead of whimpering, I sang to help keep your courage up, and helping you, I half forgot my own fear.”

“Say, you’re a trump!” cried Antony.

“Well, I did my best, for you were fine to take me over to Foam Ridge and back, and I’m sorry I kept you waiting so long, but I forgot all about you, and all about the errands while I was tramping up the beach and singing. I remembered both after a while, so it’s all right now,” said Vera.

“You’re a funny girl!” said Antony.

“You said I was a trump!” Vera replied.

“But to forget a friend one minute, and then do anything to help him the next! You sure were brave.”

“Brave out on the water,” Vera said, “and awfully afraid of—grasshoppers on the land.”

Antony laughed.

“I’ll defend you from the fearful grasshoppers when we’re on land,” he said. “Father won’t let me carry a pistol, but perhaps a big club would do.”

Vera urged him to go up to the house and rest before returning to Foam Ridge but Antony knew that his father was already impatient of the delay, so he went back to his boat, and, grasping the oars, started on the homeward trip. Vera stood for a moment watching him, then turned toward the house.

The door flew open, and Dorothy rushed out onto the porch, followed by Nancy, who called to Mrs. Dainty that Vera had returned.

“Oh, Vera, Vera! Where have you been?” cried Dorothy.

Vera’s eyes were dancing, and she looked more elfish than ever before, as she stood, with dripping garments, offering a large square package for Dorothy.

“For you,” she said. “The wrapping is wet, but I’m sure what is inside is all right. I kept it under my cloak when the wind

would let me. It blew a gale, and kept twitching my cloak right out of my hands, but open it, and see what I brought you."

"But you haven't told us where you've been, and you've given us such a fright," said Nancy.

"Candy, bonbons, and chocolates!" cried Dorothy.

"Vera, dear, did you send Antony over to Foam Ridge for them?"

"No, indeed. I went over with him, so I could choose them myself. Dorothy said she wished she had some bonbons, and I thought I'd give her a nice little surprise, and I've another surprise, too."

Vera's eyes were sparkling now.

"Fireworks!" she exclaimed, as she opened the large bundle. "Roman candles! We'll set them off to-night—if it clears off, and I'm 'bout *sure* it will."

It was impossible to speak severely to her, for her risky trip in the storm had been wholly unselfish. She loved Dorothy, and made the trip to give her pleasure.

“Vera, dear, you must get into dry clothing at once,” Mrs. Dainty said, and later, when she came down, looking none the worse for her drenching, she listened patiently to gentle words of advice. “I know that nearly all of your careless acts are done in efforts to make pleasure for your friends. You are loving, and very lovable, Vera, but sometimes you cause your friends needless anxiety. We have been badly frightened this morning,” Mrs. Dainty said.

“I’m sorry, *truly* I am,” Vera replied, “but I thought I’d be back again with my fine surprise before any one would miss me. I would have returned in half the time if I

hadn't forgotten all about what I went to Foam Ridge for."

"You forgot your errand?" Mrs. Dainty said in surprise. "I hardly see how you could forget what you so eagerly started out to do."

"Oh, I forget so easily," Vera said, "and when Antony ran his boat up on the beach, I jumped out into the bit of water that hadn't yet run out with the tide, and ran up onto the beach. The wind was behind me, and just pushed me along, and it was such fun that I began to sing. I'd told Antony that it wouldn't take me long to do my errands, but walking and singing out there in the storm was great sport and I'd walked 'way beyond the stores before I remembered what I meant to do. Walking back, the wind was in my face, and held me back as

strongly as it before had pushed me forward."

"Vera, weren't you frightened out on the water in a storm?" Mrs. Dainty asked.

"Yes, indeed I was, but I kept singing to cheer Antony, and to make myself think that I wasn't really afraid."

"Vera, you're a puzzling little creature," Mrs. Dainty said, drawing her close, "but you must promise to tell me what you are about to do after this."

Vera promptly promised, and ran to join Dorothy and Nancy in the big living-room.

At the rear of the house the servants were talking of Vera's latest prank.

"She's a warm-hearted little girl," Sue was saying. "She went out in the storm just to get some candy for Miss Dorothy."

"Sure she did thot same," remarked John, "an' by that koind deed, gave me a foine

thramp the length o' this island, wid no fun in it, ter shpake of."

"She got a parcel of Roman candles," said Sue, "an' she—"

"Whisht!" said John. "Don't shpake about *Roaming* candles, for wotever they be I hope they don't do any more *roaming* nor she does, an' if they *do*, Oi'll not go a shtep afther thim."

CHAPTER V

AN ISLAND PARTY

BETTY CHASE had been away on a visit, and now that she was once more at Foam Ridge, she meant to lose no time in going to Gem Island.

The morning after her return, she ran along the plank walk, and down the beach, just ready for a dip.

She had not realized that any one was following her, until as she sprang over an in-rolling wave, her outstretched hand was firmly grasped by some one who was behind her. Betty turned quickly, and was greeted by a loud laugh.

“Guess you don’t remember me,” said the

girl who now stood close beside her in the breakers.

The surf was not running high, and the waves broke softly on the beach, then receded.

“I remember you,” Betty said quietly. She could not say that she was glad to see her. “And I know that Mrs. Carrolton is your aunt.”

“That’s right,” said the girl, “she is my aunt, and I am Geraldine Togmore. Going to be here all the season? I hope you are, Betty Chase, for I mean to be over on your porch most of the time.”

Betty stifled a sigh, and answered the question.

“Yes, we are to be here all summer,” but she did not say that she would be glad to have Geraldine for a steady guest on her porch.

Betty was always kind, and she tried always to be courteous, but she would not be untruthful, so as she could not honestly say that she would enjoy Geraldine's company, at any and all times, she let it pass as if she had not heard it.

"Susannah Searles is to be here a part of the summer, and some one said that Dorothy Dainty would be here soon, or that is what I thought was said, but I've not seen her yet. Have you?"

"I've been away on a little visit," Betty replied, "but I'll make a trip over to see her."

"*Over where* to see her? Isn't she at Foam Ridge?" Geraldine asked, her eyes round with surprise.

"Oh, I thought you must have heard. They are in the big house on Gem Island, and I think it must be great sport to be living

there, in the great house upon the cliffs," Betty said.

"Why?" Geraldine asked.

"*Why?*" repeated Betty. "Because it looks like a castle, and they can look out across the water and see whoever approaches, and I think it is a wonderful place. You could play it was fortified."

"H'm," said Geraldine, "Guess I'll go over some day and see it myself. I'll get a girl I know to take me over in her father's naphtha launch."

They had been capering about in the shallow water, but now Betty stood still.

"Do you mean Susannah Searles?" she asked.

"Yes, she's a *great* friend of mine," Geraldine replied with a comical toss of her head.

"Well, if she was my own *sister*, I wouldn't get into that little launch with her,

if I wanted to be sure of ever getting back onto land again," said Betty.

"What an idea!" cried Geraldine, "when *any* one could run that little launch! 'Tisn't any great thing to run a launch, and I just simply *know* that if it puzzled Susannah, I could do it myself."

Betty paid no attention to the silly boast. After a moment, Geraldine spoke again.

"I heard all about that time last summer, when Susannah took you and Dorothy Dainty and Nancy Ferris out on a trip, and how Dorothy almost fainted with terror, and you and Nancy were 'bout as scared. When Susannah saw how scared you all were, she actually had to turn the boat around, and start for the shore."

"Is *that* the way that Susannah told it to you?" Betty asked quietly.

"Why, yes!" replied Geraldine, "and how

much more would you want her to tell?"

"I wouldn't care to have her tell *any* more," said Betty, "but I'd surely want her to tell it a bit nearer like the way it really was."

A low pony-phaeton was being slowly driven along the beach, its colored driver closely watching the bathers, as if he were looking for one whom he would recognize.

"That's her, the young nuisance!" he muttered, then drove a bit nearer. "Miss Geraldine! Miss Geraldine!"

Geraldine turned and stared. One might have thought that it was the first time that she had ever seen him.

"Your aunt is looking everywhere for you," said the man.

"Well, let her look!" Geraldine said.

"An' she sent me out to find you," he continued.

“Well, you’ve found me,” said Geraldine, “so you might as well go back.”

“You’d best let me drive you home, for Missus is gettin’ impatient.”

Betty drew a long breath of relief as she stood looking after the phaeton. “It isn’t nice to be glad she’s gone,” she said softly, “but she is so—well—unpleasant.”

Just at that moment, she saw a resolute figure tramping along the beach, a basket on his arm, and his cap pushed back from his forehead. It was Antony, and something in his merry whistle made Betty look fixedly at him. It was evident that he was very happy over something, and she believed that she knew what it was.

“Antony!” she called.

He turned, and walked toward her.

“You were going right on up the beach without stopping to speak to me,” Betty

said. "Were you in such a hurry that you couldn't do that?"

"No," Antony said, looking down at the sand, as if he did not like to meet her eyes.

"I thought when I heard you whistling that you were feeling gay over the same thing that pleased me this morning. The postman brought me an invitation to the party at Gem Island, and he must have brought yours to you, for Dorothy sent me a little note, too, and she told me of a number of boys and girls that were invited, and you were one of those that she named."

"Oh, yes, I have my invitation," he said, "and Dorothy was kind indeed to send it to me, but it may be that I'd best not go."

"Why, Antony Marx! What an idea! It is to be a wonderful party, and you'll have a fine time if you go, and Dorothy would think it odd if you didn't value her invita-

tion enough to just make that little trip over to the Island.”

“Oh, I do,” Antony said, “and she was good to ask me to be there. I know that she and Nancy would be glad to see me, but the others—” He paused.

“What others?” Betty demanded. “Aren’t we all friendly, Antony?”

“You are, Betty Chase! You’re a trump, and even Susannah Searles isn’t bad, but that other girl, Geraldine, and her friend, Archie St. Clair, the sissy—”

“Archie St. Clair is away, so he will not be there,” said Betty.

Antony’s face brightened.

“And as to Geraldine—?”

“She said yesterday that she thought the fishermen of Foam Ridge should not be—well should not be noticed by the summer people,” Antony said.

“Did Geraldine say that?” Betty asked, her dark eyes flashing.

“You just come to that party, Antony Marx, and if you ask me to let you take me out to the supper, I’ll be *proud* to go with you. Don’t you care a fig for what a girl like Geraldine *thinks* or *says*.”

“I’ll be there, Betty, and proud enough I’ll be to take you out to supper,” said the boy, and he went off whistling.

Lanterns, lanterns of every shape, and color! Big lanterns, bigger lanterns, giant lanterns, swaying, dipping, dancing in the cool evening breeze.

They had looked fine at twilight, but now they blazed, like jewels of the night.

Gem Island was fairly blazing with color.

The lanterns bobbed along the shore, they hung from shrubs and trees, they outlined

the porch of each house, were festooned along the gallery, and hung high up on the tower.

Among the little guests who walked about the lawn, listening to the fine music that the band was playing, were a few who had come from Merrivale.

Molly Merton, Katie Dean, with her cousin Reginald, Reginald's big brother, Arabella Correyville, and her cousin Leander, and—Patricia Levine!

Patricia had not been invited, but, with her usual boldness, had invited herself.

“As long as Arabella was invited, I thought you wouldn't mind if I came along, too!” she said to Dorothy. Patricia's boldness was amazing.

One would hardly believe that a child would care to attend a party to which she had not been invited, but Patricia would do any-

thing, rather than have it said that she was not there. Dorothy, in white muslin with blue ribbons and pink rosebuds, was very fair, and Nancy in pink muslin with pink ribbons kept close beside her as they moved about among their friends, eager that none should feel neglected.

Vera was dancing, flitting, not for a moment still, and some one said that her light green frock made her look like a water sprite.

Jack Tiverton, one of the boys from Merivale, stood talking with Flossie and her Uncle Harry.

“I can’t row worth a cent,” Jack was saying. “I’ve had little chance to be out in a boat, and no one to coach me.”

“Will you be my guest for a few days, Jack?” Uncle Harry said.

“Why, thank you, sir, I can’t think of

anything I'd like better," Jack said, eagerly.

"Well, then," said Uncle Harry, "there's the very chap to coach you, for he is absolutely at home in a boat. Antony!"

Antony turned and hurried toward him. When the two boys were introduced, Jack heartily grasped Antony's hand, and from the start each liked the other, and each knew that he had found a friend.

There were games out on the lawn for the first of the evening, and Antony was one of the best of the players.

There were prizes to be won, and all were eager to strive for them.

The boy's prize was to be a fine scarf-pin.

Geraldine Togmore meant to try very hard for a prize, the girl's prize being a dainty brooch.

A stake driven into the lawn, and many-colored hoops to be tossed upon it, was the

game that had looked to be so simple that nearly all were tempted to try for the prize. It was a very old game, but many of the girls and boys had never played it, and excitement ran high.

Geraldine had thought that she could easily toss her hoops onto the stake. The first that she flung went far to the right, the second, as far to the left, and the third went over the stake and about ten feet beyond it. As she saw the third hoop flying far beyond the stake, she turned away in disgust.

“It’s a silly game!” she said as she left the group of players, and wandered over to a low seat.

A clump of flowering shrubs hid a group of boys and girls who were chatting, but Geraldine plainly heard what they were saying.

“Who is that girl that left the game, soon

as she found that she couldn't win the prize without trying?" a boyish voice asked.

"I don't know her name," a girl's voice replied, "but she wasn't very polite to say the game was silly. It wouldn't be very nice to speak like that about anything that has been planned for the party. Out of ten hoops that I flung only two went onto the stake, but it was fun, all the same. Fun just to try."

"Who is that fine-looking fellow who already has seven hoops over the stake?"

"Dorothy called him 'Antony' just now. I don't know his other name. Some one said that he belongs here."

"Well, I guess he's one of the sort that can do 'most anything, for Jack Tiverton says he can handle a pair of oars in great shape, and he has promised to coach Jack—oh, I say! Look! He *did* win the prize, and Dorothy is presenting it. Good for him! Hurrah!"

With hearty good-will their voices joined in the general cheering, and Geraldine rose hastily and walked farther away from the sound of the laughter and good cheer.

Vera Vane won the girl's prize. The boys had picked up the hoops for her, keeping her supplied, so that she might try again and again.

She was so eager and excited that she could hardly keep still long enough to throw a hoop, and when she was proclaimed the winner, she actually gasped.

"*Me!* Truly for *me?*" she cried. "Why, how ever did I win it. Oh-oo! Pin it on for me, quick. Somebody hold me tight so I won't fly all to pieces!"

"I'll hug you," Dorothy cried, laughing at Vera's excitement, "and Vera, dear, you're more fun even than the game."

With the pretty pin in place, Vera did a

comical whirl, some funny steps, another whirl, like a top, and sat down.

“I always feel better after a whirl,” she declared, and she wondered why they laughed.

“You must feel great most of the time, then,” said Jack Tiverton, “for you seem to be whirling whenever I look your way.”

“Well, Jack Tiverton, the next time—” Both were laughing, but Jack did not learn what her threat was to be, because just at that moment, Betty Chase, with Antony Marx, ran toward them.

“I don’t believe you heard supper announced. We were just going up to the house, and Antony thought of you, so we came down here to tell you. Come on!” cried Betty, and the others were quick to follow.

There was an open courtyard between the

two houses, and it was there that the spread was served.

A fine tree stood at each corner of the square courtyard, and the huge scarlet canopy was hung from the trees, a square of scarlet cloth with golden dragons upon it.

From Japan it came, and from each corner hung a big red lantern, while little lanterns of varied colors bobbed and danced along its edges.

“What a grand place to have a supper in!” said Antony, his dark eyes dancing.

“And what a grand supper to enjoy in any sort of place!” said Reginald Dean, and the others agreed.

Mrs. Dainty well knew that the salt air would sharpen the appetites of her little guests, and there was substantial food, as well as tempting dainties. A huge chicken-pie held the place of honor, and there were

sandwiches of every sort. There were cups of hot bouillon, and hot chocolate, and these were enjoyed, as the breeze that swept in from the sea was becoming cooler. After these came the ices and cakes, and bonbons.

Uncle Harry told jolly stories that kept them laughing at his ready wit.

Arabella Correyville, and her cousin, Leander, did not appear to be amused. They were a droll pair, whose minds worked so slowly that they did not see the point of a joke until long after it had been told, and by that time another story was being told. Geraldine sat next to them at the table, and she looked as if she were still provoked because she had not won a prize.

Nancy and Flossie were listening to Uncle Harry, who was telling of a trip that he had once taken when, as a small boy, he had played truant from school.

He had hoped to catch a lot of fish, but instead had one very tiny trout to show for his efforts. He said he caught something when he reached home, but it wasn't fish.

Geraldine thus far had been silent, but now she spoke.

Looking sharply at Antony, she said: "Well, I wouldn't go fishing, or get into a fishing-boat for anything, for I hate the horrid smell of fish."

Antony's dark cheeks reddened, and Dorothy looked in hurt surprise at the girl who was willing to be so rude.

"Well, I can tell you of a trip I enjoyed, and I had to smell some fish, too," said Leander, in his slow, drawling voice. It was the first time he had spoken.

"Let's have it," said Uncle Harry, hoping to turn attention from Antony. Little did he dream what was coming.

“Oh, ’t isn’t a story, but my father took me with him one time when he was going to inspect a big fish-canning factory, and I enjoyed that trip. It was a big plant, and I saw them canning salmon, and say! That girl over there just said she couldn’t stand a *little* fish! What would have happened to her if she had visited the big Togmore factory?”

“I think you’re just perfectly horrid!” cried Geraldine. “I don’t know who you are, but you’re horrid!”

Leander blinked in surprise.

“I don’t know who you are,” he drawled, “and I don’t want to,” he said slowly, wondering what had angered her.

Not even Uncle Harry understood, but Mrs. Dainty knew.

Geraldine Togmore was an orphan, and

the money that she had inherited had been made in the canning factory of which Leander had told.

She had sneered at fishing in order to spite Antony because he would not take her out in his boat, preferring to take Dorothy and Nancy. In telling of the Togmore factory, Leander had said that if one did not like the odor of fishing on a small scale, how much worse would it be if one visited a canning factory where fish was handled by wholesale.

Leander had not heard her name, so he was still mildly wondering what had made her eyes flash.

Geraldine's silly pride had made her often wish that her father had been a banker, or had dealt in jewels, but fish—oh, she *did* wish he had had nothing to do with fish.

Foolish girl! Why did she not think that

she could do good with her money, and that it mattered not at all *how* it was acquired, so long as it was honestly gained?

They now turned toward the house, and soon nimble feet were dancing to merry music.

Games were next in order, and Antony found himself so popular that he forgot both Geraldine and her unkindness.

In one game, "The Prince and His Princess," it was little Flossie Barnet who chose Antony.

As she placed the badge upon his breast, she looked up into his eyes so earnestly that he blushed.

"You do look like a prince, doesn't he, Uncle Harry?" she said.

"Antony is quite a lad," agreed her uncle heartily.

Patricia had certainly enjoyed the party,

and she was glad that she had come even although uninvited.

Already she was planning a wonderful description of the party to be told to her aunt, and to every one that she chanced to meet when she returned to Merrivale.

She had heard Mollie Merton say that she and Katie Dean, and her cousin Reginald, were to stay at Flossie Barnet's house, and that others were to be the guests of Mrs. Dainty.

Betty Chase's father was to come over in the launch to call for her, and Antony Marx would return to Foam Ridge with them.

"Which house will you stay at, Arabella?" Patricia asked, "'cause I shall snuggle in where you do."

She had been bold enough to invite herself, and she was determined to have all the fun there was to be had.

“Arabella isn’t going to stay *anywhere*,” declared Leander. “I promised Aunt Matilda I’d bring her home to-night, and if you want me to get you home, Patricia, you’ll just step lively, for I’ve just found out that the launch is waiting. Now, step quick, I say.”

Patricia obeyed. She dared not do otherwise.

CHAPTER VI

PIRATE BAR

“**Y**OU can’t go out in fine clothes,” said Antony, as they stood on the shore at Foam Ridge. “The boat isn’t what you’d call ‘bone dry’ at the bottom, and besides we’re sure to get drenched with spray when we ride the breakers.”

“I’m limited to the suit I wore down to the party. If I’d dreamed of being invited to stay, I’d have brought some other duds along,” Jack said.

“I could lend you a ‘rig,’ but I’ll bet you wouldn’t wear it. Say! It’s about as tasty as the one I have on,” Antony said, laughing.

“You can bet I’d wear it. What do you

suppose I care how I look? I'm going out rowing. Did you think I was going to a beauty show?"

"You're all right, Jack," declared Antony, "and you've given me a big surprise, for I'd never believed, as I saw you last night at the party, that you'd agree to do anything that called for outrageous old clothes."

Jack laughed. Then he said: "The same to you, Antony Marx. You weren't dressed for clam-digging, were you? You didn't look like it when you took Betty Chase out to supper."

"Well, come on over to that little shanty, and I'll bring you a rig such as you never wore," said Antony.

In a few moments he returned, and when Jack stepped out upon the beach in his new costume, he looked as if he had always been

a fisherman's son. No, one thing would have spoiled that idea, for below the old trousers his legs gleamed white, and untanned.

A loose blouse hung from his shoulders, and a broad-brimmed old hat with a hole in the crown completed his costume.

"My, doesn't it feel good to wear things I needn't take care of?" he said. "Come on, Antony! I'm eager for the lesson in rowing."

"You'll blister your hands," warned Antony, and again he was surprised.

"What do I care for a few blisters if I can learn how to handle the oars as an oarsman should? The last time I tried it the fellows guyed me unmercifully. Said I used them as if they were *teaspoons!* Gee! I vowed then and there that the first chance I had to learn, I'd make good use of."

Jack proved to be an apt pupil, and Antony took an honest pride in coaching him.

The party guests who had remained at Gem Island that night had left on the launch at early morning, and now on the beach, Dorothy, Nancy, Vera, and Flossie were talking over the happenings of the day before.

“This island looked like a fairy isle,” said Vera, “and I never saw so many lovely lanterns before. There was every color you could think of, and odd shapes such as I surely never thought of.”

“It did look pretty, and I think every one had a fine time,” Dorothy said.

“I heard Patricia, as usual, telling a funny yarn,” Nancy said, laughing. “Some one was saying that it looked lovely here with such a huge number of lanterns, and Patricia said that she went to a party once in

N'York, where, besides all the lanterns that were hanging, there were just *oceans* of lanterns sitting around on the floor, and you had to be careful not to step on them."

"Oh, why does Patricia tell such—" Nancy paused.

"I guess it is 'cause she *is* Patricia," Flossie said, "and oh, look! Look! Antony is rowing to the island."

"And who is that with him that looks just like him," cried Vera. "You never said Antony had a brother, and where has he left his fine pupil? Jack went out with him this morning."

It was not until the two occupants of the boat had landed, and were running toward them that they recognized Jack.

How they laughed.

"We didn't know you!" they cried as if with one voice.

“I hardly know myself,” said Jack, “but say, girls! I’ve had the greatest time. Antony lent me this outfit, and it has been more fun out there on the water, rowing, getting splashed with spray, having my bare feet in a puddle in the bottom of the boat, and all the time having to give never a thought to the clothes I was wearing. I don’t know when I’ve been off on a trip that did me so much good.”

“Oh, Jack, I’m so glad you could stay,” Dorothy said.

“And so am I,” said Jack, “and I’ve made Antony promise to come to Merrivale for a little visit, for he’s sure to like Merrivale, and I want my father to know the chap that taught me to row.”

“That will be fine,” said Nancy, “but, Jack, what have you done with your other clothes?”

“Sure enough! They’re over at Foam Ridge. Well, I’ll get them now,” and like a flash Antony was in his boat, and rowing for the shore, while they watched his progress with admiring eyes.

“Come!” cried Vera, who could not stand still another second: “let’s join hands and dance!”

They waited for no urging, and around they flew in a circle, light of foot, and light of heart.

And while the girls were dancing, Jack was searching for the gardener.

A number of the boys had found him on the evening of the party, and had coaxed him to tell them tales of hunting and adventure, and he had hinted that those to which they had listened were not all the weird tales that he knew.

He was engaged in telling a pirate story

when Antony returned. Jack's eyes were wide with excitement.

"Come on down here, every one of you, and listen to the greatest sea yarn you ever heard," he cried, and the girls all interest, ran to where Jack and Antony stood entranced by the tale that John was telling.

"To think," cried Jack, "that out there on Pirate Bar, a pirate ship was wrecked years and years ago, and they say that now, on nights when there's no moonlight, folks see that ghostly white pirate ship just as plain, as—oh, as plain as anything!"

"We've never seen it," said Dorothy, slowly, but evidently much impressed, but Nancy looked out to where Pirate Bar gleamed white in the sunlight.

"How can the pirate ship be seen when there's no ship there?" she asked.

"No one knows how it *can* be seen," John

said testily, "an' we ain't even *supposed* to know, but them as has seen it don't doubt their own eyes."

"Have you seen it, John?" questioned Jack, to which the old fellow replied:

"Well, me boy, I jist heard the yarn this morning from an old feller wot was once a seafaring chap, but now is raisin' garden truck on a little place he owns over beyond Foam Ridge. He come over here early wid some wegetables an' fruit Mrs. Dainty had ordered, an' before goin' back, he sat down, sociable like, fer a bit of a chat wid me, an' it's then he told me the tale of the phantom ship. Ter-night, if it be moonlight, it's no use lookin', but the fust dark night I'll be on the lookout, although if I see it, I know me hair will be on end."

"Mine will, too," said Jack, "for it never cares to stay in place, no matter how much I

brush it, and if I see that ghost ship over there on the bar, I believe I'll never be able to even brush it again."

"I've heard so many yarns, ever since I can remember, that not a single hair of mine rises now, no matter what I hear," Antony said, "but I never heard that story, and I thought my father knew all of the stories there are about this place. There are all sorts of legends about Pirate Bar, but while 'most all the fishermen believe there's pirate's gold, just loads of it, hidden somewhere on the bar, no one has ever found a bit of it. Men have dug there hoping to find it, but, so far, no one has found anything by digging but more sand."

"Well, if I were a man," said Vera, "or even a big boy, I'd go over there with a shovel, and I'd dig all day and every day until I felt sure that the treasure was not

hidden on that much of the bar that is above the sea, and the next thing I'd do, I'd dive down to see if they had sunk it just off the shore."

"And suppose you *couldn't* dive?" Jack asked, teasingly.

"Then I'd hire a man that *could*," Vera said, promptly.

"Well, I may take a notion to dig up and down the length and breadth of Pirate Bar sometime," Antony said, "but I don't feel in a rush to begin."

"I don't see why," Vera said.

"Oh, I told you that so many men had dug there, and not one of them ever found anything."

Vera was persistent.

"But you might be the very one that would," she said, eagerly.

CHAPTER VII

THE SHIP ON THE BAR

PIRATE BAR was one of the places that held the interest of the people who came to the shore. It was only a narrow strip of land, with neither tree nor shrub upon it. It had no beauty, but it had a mystery, and the fishermen picked up many a dollar by relating the story of the treasure that the pirates had hidden away somewhere on the Bar, and then taking those who had listened out across the bay that they might explore that bit of land where pirates once had been. Rarely did a week pass without a new pirate story in circulation, and now the latest one seemed fairly to surpass all other legends.

Jack and Antony had been greatly interested, but the girls were more than interested; they were excited.

“It is no use looking for it on a moonlight night, because the boys say it doesn’t show then,” Nancy said, “and a stormy night wouldn’t be any better. We couldn’t see as far out as Pirate Bar if it was raining.”

“It won’t storm to-night,” said Vera, “and if there’s no moon, I’ll stand on the porch, and I’ll stare and stare until, ’way, ’way out there I can see that pirate ship. Won’t that be wonderful? Aren’t you nearly wild to see it, Dorothy?”

“I would, and—I wouldn’t like seeing it,” Dorothy said slowly.

“ ’Fraid?” questioned Vera, laughing.

“No,” Dorothy said firmly, “not afraid, but every time that I think of seeing it, I wonder if I do really wish to.”

“I know,” said Nancy. “Dorothy feels just as I do about it. It is that if the pirate ship should be ever so plainly in sight, it isn’t real, and that makes us feel not really scared, but just *queer*.”

“Well, that’s the part I like,” said Vera, “that makes you catch your breath. Oh, how I *do* like to be scared!”

Aunt Charlotte had been away for a few days, and now as Uncle Harry’s fine launch came puffing up to the little pier, they saw that she had returned, and soon he was coming up toward the house with her.

They ran to meet her, and each was eager to tell her a bit of their latest news.

“My party was fine, Aunt Charlotte, and I did so wish that you were here,” Dorothy said, lovingly. “You’d have enjoyed it; every one did. Oh, that is the best part of having a party. I feel so happy when I

look around, and see that every one is having a good time.”

“That is true, Dorothy. In giving pleasure, we make happiness, and we, ourselves, are happy,” Aunt Charlotte said.

“And Antony came, and he won a prize, and Betty Chase went out to supper with him,” said Nancy.

Then the three tried to tell about the pirate ship.

Aunt Charlotte laughed.

“If you’ll regard the tale as merely amusing, that will be all right, but you surely must not for a moment believe a story like that,” she said.

And now, while it still was daylight, the moon appeared, showing faintly as if barely hinting that evening was almost at hand.

“Well, moony, moony! You’re a nuisance,” cried Vera. “I have to go home

next week, and I do want just a glimpse of that pirate ship before I go. I know I'll just shiver if I do see it, and that would be such fun!"

The next morning Uncle Harry took them out for a little trip in the launch, and, before returning, stopped at Foam Ridge to make some purchases.

They were to walk up and down the beach for a short time, when he would take them back to the island. Flossie had picked up a long string of kelp, and was dragging it through the little pools that the receding tide had left. She was a bit behind the others. Dorothy and Nancy walked arm in arm. Vera from time to time picked up small shells thus enlarging her collection.

Neither of them noticed a girl, who, coming from the section where the stores were, was now doing her best to head them off,

thus ensuring her the chance of meeting them.

“Hello! Wait for me, everybody.”

They turned, as they were bid, and waited for Susannah. What else could they do? If they did not wait, she would overtake them, and be far more unpleasant than if they paused to hear what she had to say.

“I want to tell you about a trip that Geraldine and I are planning, and it will be some trip. Say! We’re going out in my father’s launch, and you couldn’t guess in a month where we’re going, so I’ll tell you. We’re going over to Pirate Bar, and we’ve just bought two small shovels, and we’re going to dig for that treasure that all the boys are talking about. I wonder they don’t go over there and dig, instead of just talking. We both feel *sure* that we shall hit the very spot where the gold was hidden.”

“Isn’t it nice that you feel *sure?*” Vera asked, quietly.

Susannah glanced up sharply, but Vera’s eyes looked very mild, quite as if she had meant what she said.

“Of course it’s fine to feel sure,” she said, “and if the man that lives there don’t mind, we’ll be all right.”

“I didn’t know that any one lived there,” Dorothy said.

“He doesn’t live right out on the Bar, but he’s built a little shanty on the mainland, and he watches every boat that either stops or passes. The boys say he doesn’t intend that any more people shall come there to dig, but I guess he’ll let two little girls land there. Anyway, we’re going to. The boys have seen him, and his wife, too, and they say they’d be more afraid of her than they would be of him.”

“Why do you go there, if you know they don’t want you to?” Nancy asked.

“To dig for gold. I told you that, before,” Susannah said rudely, “and for ’nother reason. To show the boys that they, not we girls, are ‘fraidie cats.’ ”

Uncle Harry was now coming rapidly along the beach, and saying good-by to Susannah, they ran to meet him.

“I’ll come over to Gem Island some day soon to see you,” she called as the launch was leaving the pier.

They were now too far off to reply, so they waved their hands to her. Uncle Harry only laughed when they told him what Geraldine and Susannah planned to do.

“They may *think* that they are going out in the launch on that trip to Pirate Bar, but thinking and doing are not quite the same thing,” he said. “I am sure that Mrs. Car-

rolton would not permit her little niece to go out in that launch without some grown person with her who is capable of running it, and if Mr. Searles is as sensible a man as I think he is, he will put a stop to any such wild cruise as Susannah and Geraldine have planned."

"But, Uncle Harry, they truly *think* they are going," said Flossie.

"And Susannah seems just determined!" declared Vera.

"And Mrs. Carrolton does truly let Geraldine do as she likes," said Dorothy.

"And Geraldine *likes* to do awful things," Nancy hastened to add.

"And after listening to all of these remarks," Uncle Harry said, "I stick to my statement. Now, wait and see if I am right."

The afternoon was rather warm for lively

games, and Nancy proposed sitting in the big swinging seat on the porch, and taking turns at telling stories, but Vera was too restless for that.

“Oh, let’s not sit still!” she cried. “What if we do get nearly roasted, we can get cool again, can’t we?”

“Oh, surely we can,” Dorothy said, quickly. “What shall we play?”

She knew that Vera was a bit selfish, but she was a guest. Dorothy was eager that Vera should enjoy her visit.

Vera chose tag, then hide-and-seek, and after a time, even she was glad to sit on the porch and enjoy the cool breeze that swept in from the sea.

“We might tell stories now,” she said.

Dorothy told a lovely old legend that her mother had read to her.

Then Nancy remembered one to which she

was always ready to listen. It was a happening in Aunt Charlotte's girlhood, and she told it in a very interesting manner.

"Now it is your turn, Vera."

"All right," said Vera, "I'll tell one that one of our maids told me."

It proved to be a very long story, and Dorothy and Nancy began to wonder why it interested Vera. The maid must have been a much-traveled person, for the story described happenings in the North, South, East, and West, skipped across the ocean, and gayly back again, but finally took the maid South where Vera thought the best part of the lengthy tale was yet to be related.

"Now here's the part that will make you open your eyes," she said.

"Our eyes *are* open," Dorothy said, laughing because Vera's expression was so droll.

"Now, you just hark!" commanded Vera.

“Judy Ann went over to look at the old house that her cousin was going to live in. First she looked at the cellar, but that wasn’t much to look at, and next she went through all the rooms on the first floor, and she said that she couldn’t tell *why*, but she certainly began to feel queer, and each room that she entered, she felt queerer, and when she got to the attic, she could just barely go up those stairs!”

Vera paused for effect, and then continued. “Well, when she reached the attic, there were a few old trunks and they were all covered with dust, and she was just thinking that she’d seen all there was to see, and might as well go down-stairs when she happened to turn ’round, and there stood an—
OLD WOMAN!”

Vera shouted the last two words, and Dorothy and Nancy sprang to their feet.

“Oh, who was she?” cried Dorothy, but Vera was laughing too hard to be able at once to answer.

“Oo—o! What a scare I gave you,” she cried, delighted with the impression that her story had made.

They were all laughing now, and Nancy gave Vera a bit of a shake.

“Vera Vane, you just tell us this minute who that old woman was,” she demanded.

“Oh—o!” cried Vera, “such a grand scare, and it was only the old woman that owned the house, just up in that attic to see if she’d left anything that she intended to take to her new home.”

It had been a sunny day, but at sunset the sky became overcast. It was evidently not to be a moonlight night. Often at evening a heavy fog drifted in from the sea, but on this night one could see far out across the water.

Dorothy and Nancy were out on the porch, and while neither had spoken of Pirate Bar, each was looking in that direction.

“Looking for the mysterious pirate ship?” Vera asked as she joined them.

“We all seem to be thinking about it,” Dorothy said.

“And each of us has on a warm coat or a sweater, so that looks as if we meant to stay here long enough to watch for it,” Nancy said.

“I don’t believe a single word of that story,” Dorothy said. “Mother says that it isn’t right to listen to, or to read ghost stories, because they only frighten us needlessly, since not one of them is true.”

“That’s what Aunt Charlotte tells me,” Nancy said, “and because I have no mother, she’s been the same as one to me.”

“My mother says that, too,” said Vera, “and I know she’s right, yet here we are waiting, for what? To see what we’re *sure* we won’t see?” Vera laughed, pointing her finger at the other two.

“Oo—o! Look! Look there!” Vera’s voice was shrill with excitement. They turned, and for a moment neither spoke.

Dorothy turned white, and the faces of the others were of much the same hue.

There, where in daylight they were wont to see Pirate Bar, appeared a white object, its outline hardly visible, but its steady whiteness indisputable!

Dorothy grasped Nancy’s arm, and, without a word, pointed to that white blur across the water.

Even Vera, dauntless Vera, felt very unsteady on her feet, and grasped the railing of the porch.

And below them, on the path came the voice of John.

“Och! Look ut! Look ut! Sure that’s the rascal’s ship, the pirate ship, an’ me a sinsible mon a seein’ it wid me own oyes! Wot now says them as has declared there ain’t no such thing. Away wid ye! Away, I say!” but the white radiance remained just as they had at first seen it.

Then something happened that lifted the strain of the last few moments. It was Uncle Harry singing. He had stepped out to enjoy the evening air, and his bold baritone seemed endeavoring to put their fear to flight.

“Uncle Harry! Come quick!” they cried, and the song ceased as he ran across the lawn to join them.

The gardener ran toward the porch. “Och, Mr. Harry, an’ it’s yur brave silf will

hov ter admit that th' ole pirates is ris up an' is at their owld pranks agin, whin ye see—”

“And it is so white and awful—”

“And right out there where the boys said it was, and we—”

“You just look and see if—”

John and the three little girls were all talking at once.

“Look *where*, and see *what?*” questioned Uncle Harry, laughing at their excitement. He looked out across the water, and for a moment he was silent. Then he thrust his hands in his pockets, and faced the frightened group.

“I am not in the habit of betting,” he said, “but I think I’ll risk just *saying* that I’ll bet five hundred dollars that that old fellow that lives over on the bar has rigged up something with electric light to make people believe in that ghost-ship story.

“For the last few weeks people around here have been getting a bit tired of the Pirate Bar stories, and I am pretty sure that he is trying to revive their interest. I’ll find out to-morrow if I am right. Why, little friends, see how steady that light is! That is something that that chap has contrived to scare people into believing those pirate yarns. Then they’ll be more anxious to pay for the privilege of digging there.”

“What does he charge?” Nancy asked.

“All that he dares to,” Uncle Harry said.

“He gets a dollar each from those who will pay it, but if they hesitate, he says a half dollar will do. The boys have been rowing over there lately, and commencing to dig without paying and he has driven them off. I believe he has rigged this electric-light fake ghost, thinking that the people will be more eager to dig there, and he may think that

even the boys will be more willing to pay if the mystery yarns can be made to seem more real."

Mrs. Dainty and Aunt Charlotte heard their voices, and joined the group upon the porch.

They were shown the white light out to sea, and Uncle Harry told them his intention of riding over to that part of the shore from which the point extended into the little bay.

"These little girls haven't quite gotten over their fright yet, and I am sure that John is still trembling," he said, to which John, looking a bit sheepish, replied:

"Ah, now, but a foine gintleman loike yersilf has more brains ter kape himsilf steady wid than Oi hov."

"You're all right, John," was the laughing reply, "and I'll drive over there to-morrow, and if I see you when I return, I'll tell

you all I discovered there about that spook ship.”

“An’ glad Oi’ll be ter hear it, sir,” John said respectfully.

CHAPTER VIII

ANTONY

A LETTER arrived at Gem Island that reminded Vera that she must return, and on the next day she stood on the little pier, saying good-by to the friends who had given her such a hearty welcome, and who now wished that she might longer remain with them.

“Remember,” she said, as she was boarding the launch, “Mother expects you two to make us a visit the first vacation you have. I can stay out of school to be with you whenever you come.” That was so like Vera. Any excuse to remain away from school.

“Write to us,” Dorothy called.

“Yes, oh, yes,” Vera cried in return.

“Wow, wow!” barked little Fluff, and Vera threw a kiss to him.

“Vera seems delighted and gay when she comes to us, and truly just as gay when she goes,” said Nancy.

“I don’t like to say good-by,” Dorothy said, “but Vera doesn’t mind.”

“Oh, that is just Vera,” Nancy said. “She likes to be going somewhere, whether it is going away or going home, it is all the same, because, wherever it is, it’s *going*.”

“I guess that is it,” agreed Dorothy, “and what fun we’ve had with her.”

When Uncle Harry returned on the launch, he reported that Vera was in high spirits. “Her father was at the pier, and Vera flew into his arms. She told him that her visit had been delightful.

“‘But, Vera, dear, you outstayed the length of time for which you were invited, so

that we were obliged to send for you,' Mr. Vane said.

" 'Oh, that's all right,' Vera said, 'they really didn't want me to leave to-day.' "

Uncle Harry laughed as he thought of Vera's last remark.

"Good-by," she called to him, as he was about to leave the pier. "Good-by! Oh, I surely am a funny girl, for I love to run away for a visit, and I certainly love to reach home. I'm happy anywhere!"

"May you always be happy, Vera!" he called to her, and floating out over the water came her answer:

"I wish you the same," followed by that light, rippling laugh that all her friends knew so well.

In the swinging seat Dorothy and Nancy sat close together. They both missed Vera, the bright, restless sprite. Mrs. Dainty and

Aunt Charlotte were looking over the parcel of mail that Uncle Harry had brought from the post-office at Foam Ridge.

“I have to make a trip to New York, John,” he said to the old gardener, “and you must be a faithful watchman while I am gone. You and the butler must guard the two families, and also see that no one who has no right to do so, lands on the Island.”

“We’ll do thot same, sor,” John replied, “an’ James bein’ the bigger feller av the two, Oi think Oi’ll let him do most av the guard-in’, whoile Oi do the bulk av the heavy watchin’.”

“All right, John. Divide the task to suit yourselves, but be faithful to your trust.”

“Thot we will,” John answered, stoutly.

And while Uncle Harry stood talking to the gardener, confident, because he knew that John and the butler were loyal and true, and

assured that the dear ones on that island would be safe while he and Mr. Dainty were absent, two slouching figures stood on the beach at the farther end of Foam Ridge talking of Gem Island.

They were scarcely more than overgrown lads, but their faces were hard, and their appearance far from pleasing, as they stood talking in undertones, and from time to time pointing toward the Island.

“I tell you, I’m right,” said one, “when I say that we’ll be seen before we git a chance ter land on the Island.”

“Sure we will,” the stouter one replied, “if we’re silly ’nough ter try an’ reach the pier, but I ain’t claimin’ we’ll do that. I heard that big, fine-lookin’ feller wot sings tellin’ over at the store that he was a-goin’ ter New York, an’ that he planned ter meet Mr. Dainty there. Don’t that tell yer as

plain as the nose on yer face that them two fine gents is ter be in the city ter-day, an' ter-night at least?"

"Did yer hear him say that?" the other asked.

"Ain't I jest said so?" was the sharp reply, "an' I plan ter land on the tip end er that island, where that clump of scrubby bushes is, an' stay there till it's good an' dark, and then, when the lights is out in them winders, go on over there, an' see wot we kin find that's val'able."

"We'll have some trip ter git back ter our boat, an' push off," objected the younger lad. "I mean if we git scaret."

"Naw, we won't," the other declared stoutly. "We'll put all we pick up in a ol' bag I got, an' in the darkness we kin make our way ter the boat an' get off in no time."

"We almost got ketched on that fine job

we tackled last time," growled the objector, who seemed less bold than his companion.

"Well, what if we did? Almost wasn't *quite*, an' that was on the mainland, where the 'cops' got after us. Just remember there ain't no 'cops' on Gem Island, sonny."

"All right," was the response, as if he were at last convinced.

Antony was very proud of the fact that he had found a way of earning a little extra money.

The finest grocery store at Foam Ridge had hired him to take orders and he was "making good." The customers liked him, and the firm approved of him because he was prompt and faithful. He enjoyed driving about taking orders from the cottagers, and especially he liked the three trips a week that he made to the Island.

As he drove along the farther end of the beach, he noticed the two figures so earnestly talking.

“That’s a precious pair,” he said softly. “I wonder what they’re planning now? When Pat Macy and Miles Seton are talking together as earnestly as that, they’re up to something.”

Again and again Antony thought of them as he had seen them standing and talking, and looking out across the water.

Late in the afternoon, his employer sent him on a special errand.

“I promised to send over to Gem Island to-day to see what those people over there may be needing, and I forgot all about it,” he said.

“I’ll row over there in no time,” said Antony who welcomed the excuse for a trip to Gem Island. He would have been delighted

if it had been necessary for him to go there every day. He snatched his order-book from the counter, and ran to his boat. Briskly he plied his oars, for it was already late afternoon, and he must get his order, and make a second trip to deliver the goods.

His first trip was uneventful. The cook gave him the list of what was needed, and he rowed back to Foam Ridge.

There were many customers in the store, and the clerks were rushing this way and that in haste to satisfy the people who were none too patient.

It seemed to Antony that he would never get a clerk to put up the parcels that were to fill his big basket, and twilight was at hand.

After long waiting, a man came up to him.

“Well, what is it, lad?” he asked, adding: “It’s after closing-time now.”

“But I *must* have these things for Gem Island,” said Antony.

“That’s so. Well, I’ll fill your order, and when you’ve delivered it, you can go straight home, because the store will be closed when you get back. You can leave your basket there and get it the next time you’re over there.”

After what seemed to the boy like endless waiting, the well-filled basket was given him, and he turned toward the shore.

Some one, in his absence, had thought it a great joke to dump a lot of old trash in the boat. Tin cans, old shoes, a keg, and a mass of dried seaweed, had been thrown in in evident haste, and Antony’s eyes flashed with anger at the sight.

“Funny joke!” he muttered, “and a *great* head that planned it.”

There was no time to lose, so he set to work, and at last was able to place his basket on the mass of seaweed, and row away, leaving the other rubbish on the beach.

He was hot and tired when he again landed on the island, and it was well that the cook liked him, for any one else would have received a fine scolding for being so late.

The kitchen was hot when he entered, and it seemed to grow steadily hotter while he stood waiting for the basket.

“There! Ye was late arrivin’, but I’m sure ye couldn’t help it, so there’s a apple-turnover for ye, an’ do ye sit down on the grass out there an’ eat it an’ cool off ’fore ye row back,” said the cook.

Antony thanked her, promised to be prompt next time, and then remembered that he was to leave the basket.

With his tempting treat, he threw himself

upon the grass that grew at the foot of the ledge, and rapidly that turnover vanished. He was just thinking how good it had tasted, when he thought he heard low voices as if in conversation. Antony knelt by the cliff, and listened. Who could be down there at that hour, talking so cautiously?

“It’s too early to have come up so near the house,” said a voice that was barely audible, “fer it’s pretty light yet.”

“Aw, wot’s the harm in bein’ here?”

“Wal, what would ye say if that big feller that tends the door happened around here jest about now? How’d ye explain wot we’re here for?”

“Aw g’wan now! I’d say we come to ask ’em ter give us an order fer fresh fish. We’re much nearer the house. We’ll have ter wait a while till after the lights is out, jest ter let them swell folks an’ their servants

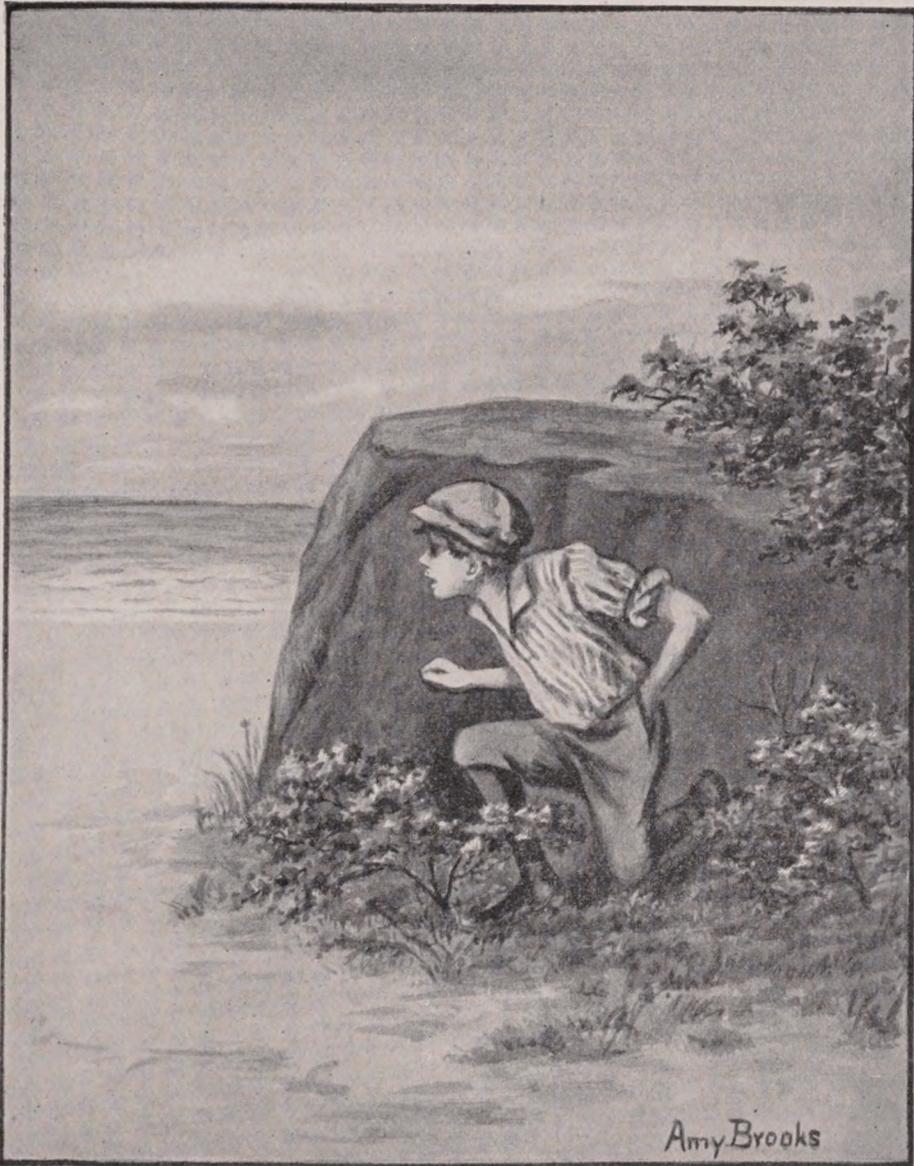
git ter sleep, an' then—us fer fillin' this bag with suthin' wuth while!"

"Thieves!" whispered Antony, "and I'll bet that's Pat Macy and Miles Seton!"

With but one thought, safety for the dear friends who had shown him such kindness, Antony paused but an instant. Should he tell the servants? No, that was only wasting precious moments. Softly, stealthily he turned toward where he had beached his boat.

Creeping across the lawn in the shadow cast by the house, he reached his little boat without having made a sound. The tide was high, and already *The Shell* was lightly floating, where a half-hour before it had rested on the sand at the water's edge.

The great ledge on which the house stood, hid the little bay where the boat was moored. Although he had driven it up on the sand,



ANTONY KNELT BY THE CLIFF, AND LISTENED.—Page 120.

he had thought if, by any chance he was detained, the rising tide might float it, so he had taken care to tie it securely to the iron ring on the pile.

Wading through the shallow water, he sprang into the boat, untied the rope, and grasping the oars, rowed slowly, softly, until he felt sure that he was far enough away so that the would-be sneak thieves could not hear the sound of vigorous rowing.

“They’ll not go near the house until they think every one is asleep,” he said, under his breath, “and the police will have them before that.”

He had been tired, but the thought of Dorothy, of Nancy, and the others of that happy family, of Flossie, and little Elfin, of Uncle Harry’s kindness to him, spurred him to renewed effort, and lent strength to his arms.

As luck would have it, when he again reached the shore at Foam Ridge, the first person that he saw was big Tim Hanlon, the chief of police.

“Wait for me, Tim!” he shouted, and the big man turned about.

“Well, well, Antony, what’s up?” he called with a jolly laugh.

“Something *is* up, and it is no joke, either. Just wait till I tell you,” cried Antony.

“Well, you’re a bright one!” declared the policeman when he had heard the story. “Now then, you’ve had ’nough rowing for one night, but I’ll get another officer, and two pairs of iron bracelets, that sounds a bit prettier than ‘handcuffs,’ and if you’ll come back with us, you can show us that quiet little landing-place that you used to-night. We must land without being seen by the two rascals. They, of course, are watching the

pier, and if they saw us coming, they would race to the other end of the island, and be in their boat and out on the water before we could reach them."

The two burly policemen made short work of rowing to the little bay on the island, and never were culprits more quietly arrested. They dared not resist. The two policemen were more than a match for them.

"Now, not a sound!" warned Hanlon, "for you'll have to come along with us, so you may as well come quietly."

Not a member of the household dreamed what was happening.

As the two rascals had neither seen Antony arrive nor depart, they thought that he had merely come over with the officers for the pleasure of seeing them arrested, that he had probably begged for the privilege, and they frowned, as they sat in sullen silence,

each vowing to "get even" with Antony, when they should regain their freedom.

Antony saw them start on their way toward the station, then he turned toward home.

"Dorothy is safe to-night," he whispered, and blushed rosy red, although there was no one there to see him, or to hear what he had said.

Antony had expected to let himself in, and go so quietly to bed that he would not waken his parents, so he was a bit surprised when he found his father standing in the doorway, smoking.

"Well, well, boy, I was gettin' a bit anxious," he said, "an' so's yer ma. Not that it's so late, but ye've not come home for supper, an' that's tur'ble odd fer you, Yer ma's lyin' down like I told her to, but she's

not asleep, fer every few minutes she asks if I see ye comin'."

"I'll eat some supper now," Antony said, "I couldn't come home sooner."

There was a lunch spread for him on the table, and he did full justice to it.

And while he ate, he told of the evening's happenings, adding:

"I couldn't leave those scamps there to plunder and rob."

"You did just right, boy," said old Antony Marx, "and I'm proud of you."

"Why, Father?" the boy asked in astonishment. "What else could I do?"

"Nothing else," said his father, "being the good lad you are."

CHAPTER IX

AT BETTY'S COTTAGE

THE dwellers on Gem Island awoke the next morning happy in the thought that while Mr. Dainty was still in New York, and that Uncle Harry had sailed away to join him, they were amply protected by the big butler and his trusty aid, the gardener.

“Isn’t it fine to have two big men here, while Father has to be away, and just now, Uncle Harry away, too?” said Dorothy as she ran down the stairway, followed by Nancy.

“The butler is big, but John isn’t, well, not *very*,” Nancy replied, as she ran to join her on the lawn.

“Oi’m not big, ye say? Thot may be, but the butler an’ me tergither is thot big thot we’d not allow any quare persons ter land on this island, thot we wouldn’t!” declared John, who had heard what Nancy had said.

“Oh, we know you wouldn’t,” Dorothy hastened to say. Soon after breakfast, they stood on the little pier, looking toward Foam Ridge. The sun was shining, and, at that distance, the big hotel stood out boldly, the cottages appearing to huddle at its base.

Antony had been up at daylight, and had given *The Shell* a thorough cleaning. He had planned to take Dorothy and Nancy out for a long trip, but just as he was ready to push off, Betty ran toward him.

“Antony! Hi, Antony! Are you going over to the Island?” she shouted.

“That’s just where I’m going. Any message?” he asked.

“Yes, oh, yes,” she cried. “Tell Dorothy that I want her to come over with Nancy to spend the day with me. Ask them to come right back with you, Antony. Mother is away to-day, and I so want them.”

“All right,” he shouted, “I’ll bring them back with me in double-quick time.”

Betty’s request had changed his plans, but he showed not a sign of his disappointment. Betty had made the party delightful for him. She had been a loyal friend.

“The girls will enjoy a day with Betty,” he said to himself, “and I can take them out any time.”

Antony was always unselfish.

As he approached the island, he shouted to them:

“Hi, mates! Will you come aboard?”

“Aye, Aye!” they called, laughing.

“I’m to take you over to spend the day

with *Miss Chase*," he said with mock dignity, to which Dorothy replied:

"Very well, *Mr. Marx*, I'll tell Mother, and be back in a minute."

"Oh, that's too much. Call me Antony," he called to her.

Mrs. Dainty readily consented to Betty's invitation, and Dorothy came racing back to the pier.

"Come, Nancy," she cried, "we can go."

"This way," said Antony, "I'm your—what is it? Oh, I remember, gondolier, I'm your gondolier, and this is Venice. Father has often told me about spending a few days at Venice when he was a sailor."

"We have a large painting that shows the grand canal," Dorothy said, "and the sails look lovely against the sky."

"If I go to Merrivale to visit Jack, I'd like to see that picture," Antony said, "for of all

the foreign places that Father has described, I believe I've always liked best his stories about Venice. Maybe it's just because I've always been on the water, and I thought I'd feel at home paddling up and down their lagoons in a small boat, or floating around in a big gondola."

"Oh, you must come to Merrivale," Nancy said.

"You say Jack invited you, but we all want you to come," Dorothy added.

"That settles it, then," Antony said, "and I'll surely come."

As they neared Foam Ridge, they saw Betty racing down to meet them.

"When shall I come for you?" Antony asked. "I can't come before five, because I'm working at the store, and they're open until five."

They had reached the pier, and Betty had heard Antony's question.

"Mother said, 'Keep them for dinner at six,' and we'll not be done dinner before seven," Betty hastened to say.

"But my mother said that we must be home by six," Dorothy said, Nancy adding, "so we really must."

"Well, I'll have you 'most all day," Betty said, and Antony promised to call for them as soon as he left the store.

They spent the morning on the beach, and went over to the cottage for lunch.

"This week has been full of all sorts of happenings," Betty said, when, having enjoyed a fine lunch, they all sat swinging in the big red hammock on the porch.

Betty sat between Dorothy and Nancy, and they plied her with questions.

“We’ve not heard any news,” Dorothy said.

“Not the least bit?” Betty asked.

“Not a scrap,” declared Nancy.

“Well, first of all, a tent appeared on the beach the first thing Monday morning, and a funny-looking fellow went up and down the beach, shouting for every one to hear:

“‘Visit the wonderful Merry-go-round ter-night! Greates’ fun in the worl’ fer ten cents!

“‘Ride the gallopin’ hosses!

“‘Ladies an’ gents, also boy or girl chil-drun, welcome at ten cents each! Same price fer all!’

“He shouted so loudly, I wonder you didn’t hear him over at Gem Island. Our maid went over to the tent with two wait-resses that she knew, and she rode around so many times that she became dizzy, and she

told Mother that it made her feel *seasick*."

" 'Well, Nora, I think you must have had more than enough of that sort of pleasure,' Mother said, but Nora said:

" 'Oh, no, ma'm, if you please, ma'm, I'd like to go again to-night. I sorter likes the excitement, even if I do be seasick afterwards.' "

How they did laugh at Nora's idea of an evening's pleasure.

"Vera likes things that really aren't—well, comfortable, or perhaps I mean cheerful," Nancy said.

Betty looked up in genuine surprise. "Why, Nancy Ferris!" she cried. "I thought Vera Vane the liveliest girl I ever met."

"She is," Dorothy said quickly, "but I know what Nancy means. Vera likes to hear stories that scare her. She says she

enjoys being made to listen to stories like that one about the 'ghost ship.' She thinks it exciting to sit with her hands just gripping the arms of her chair, and she says if her hair doesn't stand on end, it *feels* as if it did."

"Flossie Barnet's uncle was intending to drive 'way 'round the bend to the place where we see that white light that they call the 'Ghost Ship,' and find out what it is, but he had to go to the city on business, and we're wild to have him come home, so we can know what it is."

"And every day we say we won't look, and just as sure as night comes, we *do* look, and there it is."

"Well, he won't have to drive over there, for everybody in Foam Ridge knows all about it now, and I'll tell you this; if you

look out across the water to-night, you won't see it," Betty said, laughing.

"Oh, oh, oh,! Who found out? Who stopped it?" cried Dorothy.

"And what was it?" questioned Nancy.

"Oh, every one was talking about it, and one night some men hired a boat, and went over there just as brave as brave could be, and just as soon as they were near the shore they saw that it was a great, heavy, wooden frame, covered with strong cotton cloth. It set up on the shore, on strong stakes driven down into the sand. The frame was lashed to the stakes. Electric lights behind it left it bright for people here at Foam Ridge to see. At this distance, no one could see its shape, and because it was on 'Pirate Bar,' they called it a ghost ship. The man that lives over there has let people think so, and

the boys say that he has taken in lots of money letting them land on the Bar, and showing them where he 'guesses' the pirates' gold *may* be hidden. He was horrid to take money that way, because he was just simply cheating," Betty concluded, "but I guess he knows now that people are laughing at the way he tried to scare them."

"Well, I'm glad I know about it," Dorothy said, slowly, "for while I know there is no such thing as a ghost, or ghost-ship, I truly didn't like to see that big, white thing showing out there across the water."

Betty had heard all about the capture of the two men on Gem Island, and she wondered why neither Nancy nor Dorothy spoke of it.

She thought it must have been exciting to have a happening like that. She believed

that Dorothy, who was timid, was trying not to think about. That must be the reason that she did not speak of it.

Betty had just decided not to speak of it, when around the corner of the house appeared Susannah and Geraldine.

“My! my! You two over here?” cried Susannah. “I wonder you weren’t afraid to leave the island. Weren’t you scared? I’d have policemen stationed at every three feet of the way around its shore, so I could feel safe. Did you hold your breath until they were captured?”

Susannah had said it all in one breath.

“‘Every *step* of the way,’ Susannah!” cried Betty. “‘Every *step*,’” she repeated. “I wonder if you think they *walked* over from the island.”

Susannah made no reply to that, but tossed

her head as if Betty's question were absurd.

"Were they big men, and did they look fierce?" she asked.

"And were you scared?" Geraldine asked.

"What do you mean?" Dorothy asked.

"Are you trying to frighten us? Are you joking?"

"Well, I guess it wasn't much of a joke. Say, they meant to rob your house of all its fine things, and one of the maids says they were desperate men, and says if any one in your house had cried out, they'd have bound and gagged—"

"Susannah Searles! Stop this minute. Look at Dorothy, and see how you've frightened her, and Nancy is almost as pale."

"But that's an awful way to joke," Nancy said, "and you know fright makes Dorothy almost sick."

"But Susannah's not joking," cried GERAL-

dine, "and if you don't know what happened on your island, you must have been sleeping soundly. My! I don't believe I could sleep with all that rumpus going on!"

"Oh, Dorothy, Nancy! I wasn't going to talk about it," Betty said, "although I never dreamed but that you knew it. I thought you simply didn't want to think about it, and that that was why you didn't speak of it, so I thought I wouldn't say a thing about it, but all Foam Ridge knows."

"But how could such a thing happen, and we never hear the least sound or even—" Nancy turned.

"Hello, girls!" cried a cheery voice, and Antony came running toward them.

"Ask Antony, if you doubt what I told you! Ask him! He'll tell you," cried Susannah, "for he *knows*, if any one does."

"Ask what?" Antony said, laughing at

her eagerness. "And who is to ask it?"

"I was telling Dorothy and Nancy to ask you if it isn't true that two thieves were caught sneaking around their house on Gem Island. They don't believe it," Susannah said defiantly.

"It *is* true," Antony said, in a low voice, "and I wish a few days had passed before you heard about it, but it is safe there now, for the two fellows are in jail, and no one else would attempt to annoy you for fear of being caught and landed in jail, as the others were."

"Well, you're a funny boy," cried Geraldine. "Why don't you tell them who caught them?"

"The police jailed them," Antony said.

"Well, I never saw a boy like you!" snapped Susannah. "Girls, it was Antony who really caught them. He was over on

your island, and he overheard two fellows telling how they meant to keep out of sight until dusk, and then get nearer to the house, and when it was dark, watch until the lights in the windows were out, and then break in and take as much as they chose."

There was a moment's silence, and then Dorothy ran to Antony, caught his hand, and looking earnestly up into his dark eyes she asked eagerly:

"Did you do that for us, Antony, *did* you? Oh, you big, brave boy, you won't tell me, but I do believe you did."

He looked down into the sweet, eager face, for a second, then, with awkward gentleness, he laid a hand on her shoulder as he said:

"I'd do anything for you, Dorothy, but it really wasn't much. The folks are making too much fuss about it."

"Tell me, Antony. Tell me about it," she

insisted, still clinging to his hand, her eager lips parted.

“There’s not much to tell,” he said, quietly, but Nancy added her plea to Dorothy’s coaxing, and with heightened color in his tanned cheeks he said:

“I was over on the island to deliver some goods that had been ordered from the store, and I threw myself down on the coarse grass at the base of the ledge to rest and cool off before rowing back. I heard voices around on the other side of the rock, and I soon found that they were planning a break at your house. First I was going to tell your gardener, or the butler, whichever one I saw first, and then I thought of a better way to catch them. I crept softly to my boat, and rowed back to Foam Ridge, and the first person I saw when I landed was big Tim Hanlon, the chief of police.”

“Yes, oh yes,” cried Dorothy. “And then, oh, tell it quicker than quick, Antony. I can’t wait to hear!”

“Well, there’s not much more to tell,” Antony said, “for big Tim didn’t waste much time. We rowed back to Gem Island, and in just no time he had Pat Macy and Miles Seton handcuffed and in the boat, as sullen a looking pair as you ever saw, and as soon as we reached Foam Ridge, they were safely locked up.”

“Antony, Antony! Father must know what you did, and I can’t wait till he is home again to tell him. Mother and Aunt Charlotte shall know all about it to-night. Nancy and I will tell them at dinner, but I’ll write to Father, and send the letter off to-morrow.

“What will he and Uncle Harry say?”

“Oh, you mustn’t think so much of it,”

cried Antony, "for I only did what any decent fellow would do."

"You sha'n't talk like that, Antony," Nancy said, "for you did a fine thing, and you didn't stop to think it over. You did it at once, and we were lucky that you were on our island, for the gardener and butler, who were supposed to be guarding us hadn't spied the two men that were just waiting their chance to break in, so if you hadn't been there, they would have—oh,—I don't like to think what those two thieves would have done."

"You don't have to think about it," said Geraldine, "for they are in safe keeping now."

CHAPTER X

ON THE PROMONTORY

ANTONY was to row them back to the island, and it was rather a quiet trio that took seats in *The Shell*.

Dorothy and Nancy were thinking how quick and clever Antony had been, and they were also thinking what had happened once might happen again, and one could not be sure that Antony would be on hand, at just the proper time, to save them.

Antony, as he bent to the oars, was thinking that the girls were making far too much of what he had done.

Betty, Susannah, and Geraldine stood on the beach.

“I’ll be over soon to see you,” Betty called.

“Well, I haven’t been invited to Gem Island yet, but I’m going to invite myself. I’m coming over some day *next week!*” shouted Geraldine, “and Susannah is coming with me.”

Dorothy nodded, and said something in reply, but the wind blew her message away from the shore.

“I don’t know what she said, but I’m going over there, and you’ll go with me,” said Geraldine, to which Susannah promptly replied:

“You may be sure I will.”

They were a strange pair, equally bold, and equally determined to go, uninvited, wherever they chose. They never paused to learn if they were welcome. They simply went to the house, where they decided to

spend a day, and at once made themselves quite at home.

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When Antony reached the tiny pier at Gem Island, he helped Dorothy and Nancy up onto the landing, and then proceeded to turn his boat toward Foam Ridge.

“Oh, Antony!” Dorothy cried, “I want you to go up to the house while I tell Mother all about what you did.”

“I must hurry back,” he called, as he rowed away, “and indeed you mustn’t think so much of what I did. I was glad enough to have the chance to do something for you. So long!” and away *The Shell* sped over the water.

Antony had caught a glimpse of some one on the porch, who he believed was Mr. Dainty, and he therefore took hasty departure. He knew that if he remained Dorothy

would tell what he had done, and that he would be praised and made much of, and that was exactly what he wished to escape.

“Dorothy is simply ‘all right,’ she’s fine, and so is Nancy, but a fellow doesn’t want to be told how brave he was, or what a big thing he did,” he said to himself.

A moment later he spoke again, softly, as if afraid that the waves might hear.

“Not but that I ’preciate their good opinion of me, but the thing I did wasn’t big enough to make a fuss over.”

Mr. Dainty and Uncle Harry took a very different view of the matter from that which Antony expressed, as Antony learned later.

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For a time, Dorothy and Nancy, when twilight came, would find themselves looking toward shadows under the big shrubs, as if in fear of some one lurking there, or peering

out across the water to learn if any unknown craft were approaching the Island, but soon they lost all fear, for when again Mr. Dainty and Uncle Harry left for a trip to the city, the gardener and butler were on guard, determined that no strangers should be able to land unseen. Boats leaving Foam Ridge were carefully inspected and their destination learned, and rough or doubtful characters found themselves unable to hire craft at any price.

“Father will be here next week,” Dorothy said to Nancy, who sat beside her on the low cliff one sunny morning.

“I heard what you said,” said Flossie, who was clambering up to a place beside them, “and I think Uncle Harry will come with him.”

“We’ll all be glad to have them home again,” said Nancy.

“We’re to have rather a long day,” Dorothy said. “I mean it will seem long, because Mother and Aunt Charlotte are over at Foam Ridge.”

“I know it,” cried Flossie, “and I know where they are, too. They’re where my mother is, and Aunt Vera, too, and that’s at a ‘Bazaar’ in the hotel parlors. It’s a Charity Bazaar, and it’s to help something, only I don’t know what.”

“Where is little Elfin?” said Dorothy.

“Oh, she’s there with Aunt Vera,” Flossie replied. “She’s dressed like Bo-peep, and the ladies are to buy tickets from her.”

For a while they sat upon the great rock, talking, but the sun began to beat hotly down upon the cliff, and, scrambling down, they turned to stroll along the beach.

“Arabella wrote a letter to me,” Flossie said. “I’d almost forgotten to tell you

about it, and that is queer, because I saw you two on the big rock and came over just purpose to show it to you. Some of it sounds so queer, I don't know what it means. You read it out loud," she said, as she took the letter from her pocket, and offered it to Nancy.

Dorothy looked over Nancy's shoulder, and little Flossie looked up at them.

"Dear Flossie," it began, a few labored remarks about the weather following.

"It's warmer this week than last week, because last week was cooler than this week, but not much cooler than this week, because this week isn't very hot anyway, and last week was only sort of—I guess I'll begin to tell you what I started to write about, and it wasn't the weather—"

"That first part I didn't understand," said Flossie, "for if she *didn't* mean to write

about the weather, why *did* she? And if she *did* mean to write about the weather, *why* did she say she didn't—and if—oh I'm getting all twisted up again—skip that part Nancy 'cause it makes me feel so horrid I truly can't listen to it."

Dorothy and Nancy were laughing, and Flossie wondered why.

Dear little Flossie considered the letter puzzling, rather than laughable. Arabella's letters were usually puzzling.

"I thought you might like to hear some news about the boys and girls at Merrivale. My cousin, that is, Leander, has always felt that he was awkward, and one day Patricia Levine said I was awkward, and I told Leander what she said. He sat still a while, and he didn't say a word.

"After a while, I said, 'Did you hear me when I told you what Patricia said?'

"'I heard you,' he said, and I was thinking. There's a sign in a window down near the post-office that says: 'Awkward people

made graceful,' and the name on the sign, in big, red letters, 'Madam Gadzooke' was the name, and Leander said he'd call there some day and find out how long it would take to make us real graceful, if we started right in, and how much it would cost.

"Leander went after school, to the house where the sign was in the window, and a great big woman opened the door. She told Leander she charged five dollars a lesson, and he asked her how long the lessons were, and the big lady said: 'That depends.'

"Leander said: 'There'd be two of us, my cousin Arabella and I. Do you mean five dollars for us two?'

" 'Well, I guess *not!*' the woman almost screamed. 'It's five dollars *each*, an' as to how long it will take, I couldn't tell.'

" 'I guess that's rather higher than we'd want to pay,' Leander said.

" 'Well, I wouldn't wonder if it 'ud be fer quite a spell ye'd need instructions, judging from yer appearance, and if yer cousin is anything like you, land knows how long you'd have need of instructions.'

"Leander just asked her if she ever tried her instructions on herself, and she shut the door, and didn't answer. Leander says he doesn't see why that vexed her.

“He says he sees no harm in the question, and he says any one that saw her would surely have asked it.

“Patricia asked Leander all about it, and when he told her, she said that while she didn’t really *need* the lessons, she thought she’d take one lesson just to see what it was like. That was some weeks ago, and Patricia is still going to Madam Gadzooke.

“She says the first time she went Madam said she was *fine*, but just a little instruction would make her even finer, and she made the price ever so much less because—well, I’ve forgotten what the reason was, but Leander says there’s probably only one reason, and that is that Madam has learned that people will not pay so much. All the same, I do believe that Patricia goes there for something else beside learning to be graceful. I’ve seen her coming out of that house three times this week, but when I ask her why she goes so often she only laughs, and says:

“ ‘Don’t you wish you knew?’ ”

“It is dull here at Merrivale, and I’ll be glad when you and Dorothy and Nancy are at home once more. Mollie Merton has been away visiting some cousins. She came home this morning. Reginald Dean, and his cousin, Katie Dean, are away, and they’ll not be home for three weeks. Aunt Matilda

says I ought to enjoy such quiet days. She says she dreads to have those lively boys back in Merrivale. I don't. Sometimes it is so still here that I'd be glad to have the boys shouting *all day long!* I wrote to you, Flossie, because I couldn't think of anything else to do.

“Your friend,

“ARABELLA CORREYVILLE.”

“That very last bit doesn't sound very polite,” Flossie said, “but she couldn't have meant it just the way it sounds when it is read.”

Dear little Flossie. Always sure to find an excuse for errors that others made.

They laughed as they talked of Leander, and the big woman whose window-sign had attracted him.

“See the funny little path, just a little footpath in the grass!” Flossie said. “I noticed it when you were reading the letter, and now we've reached its beginning, let's follow it and see where it will lead us.

Wouldn't it be great if it showed the way to some part of this island that we have not yet seen?"

"Indeed it would," Nancy said, "because we think we've seen every bit of it."

"Who knows if there is, I mean just *maybe*, a new and lovely spot for us to see?" said Dorothy.

"Come on!" cried Nancy, "we'll be explorers!"

Along the little path they sped, through a bit of field, the land gradually rising, until they found themselves standing on a cliff that gave them a wonderful view of the ocean.

"This is bigger, ever so much bigger, than the cliff near our house," said Flossie.

"Yes, and it stretches out farther from the island," said Nancy.

"Let's sit down and watch for vessels,

'way out there where the sky and water meet. The first one who sees a sail say 'Ay.' ”

“This is a really, truly promontory,” said little Flossie, “and when I learned about a promontory in my geography, I never thought I'd be sitting on one this very summer.”

“Ay!” shouted Nancy, and then Dorothy “Ay, ay!” and little Flossie joined the chorus:

“Ay, ay, *ay!*” she shrilled, for three sails were skimming along on the horizon line.

“I guess we all saw them at the same time,” Dorothy said.

They took turns telling stories, and the time flew faster than they dreamed. The servants were not surprised when Dorothy and Nancy did not return at the lunch hour, for they often lunched with Flossie.

At the same time, at Flossie's house, it was believed that she was over at the other house with Dorothy and Nancy, so no anxiety was felt.

Out on the little promontory, the three were sitting, warm in the sunlight, and each enjoying the stories told by the others.

"I'm just beginning to be hungry," said Flossie, "but I do want to hear the story of the 'Three Scarlet Feathers,' and you tell it so beautifully, Dorothy, that I almost hold my breath while I listen. Do tell it again, please," she coaxed, to which Nancy added:

"Yes, tell it, Dorothy."

It was an enchanting fairy tale, a long one, of which they never tired. The three little friends drew long breaths of delight at the story's happy ending. Dorothy sprang to her feet.

"I do believe it's after lunch-time, but

Sue will get something nice for us if we really are late, and come with us, Flossie. It will be pleasanter if we three are together.”

“Why-ee! I thought the tide was going out,” she cried, “and it’s coming in, and coming fast! Hurry, hurry, or we’ll—oh!”

Nancy and Flossie rushed to where Dorothy, terrified, stood staring down at the swirling, rushing waters that swept over the narrow strip of rock and sand that connected the cliff on which they stood, with the mainland. Flossie sank to her knees, crying with all her might, but Dorothy and Nancy were too frightened to cry. Back to where they had first sat looking out across the water, they ran at top speed, to learn if any boat were in sight, but only cloudless sky and glistening sea greeted them.

Nancy slipped an arm around Dorothy.

Flossie, who had followed them, sank on the wiry grass.

“Look 'way out there!” Nancy said pointing. “Don't you *almost* think you see a sail?”

Dorothy longed to say “yes,” but try as she would, she could not see anything but a vast expanse of sky and sea.

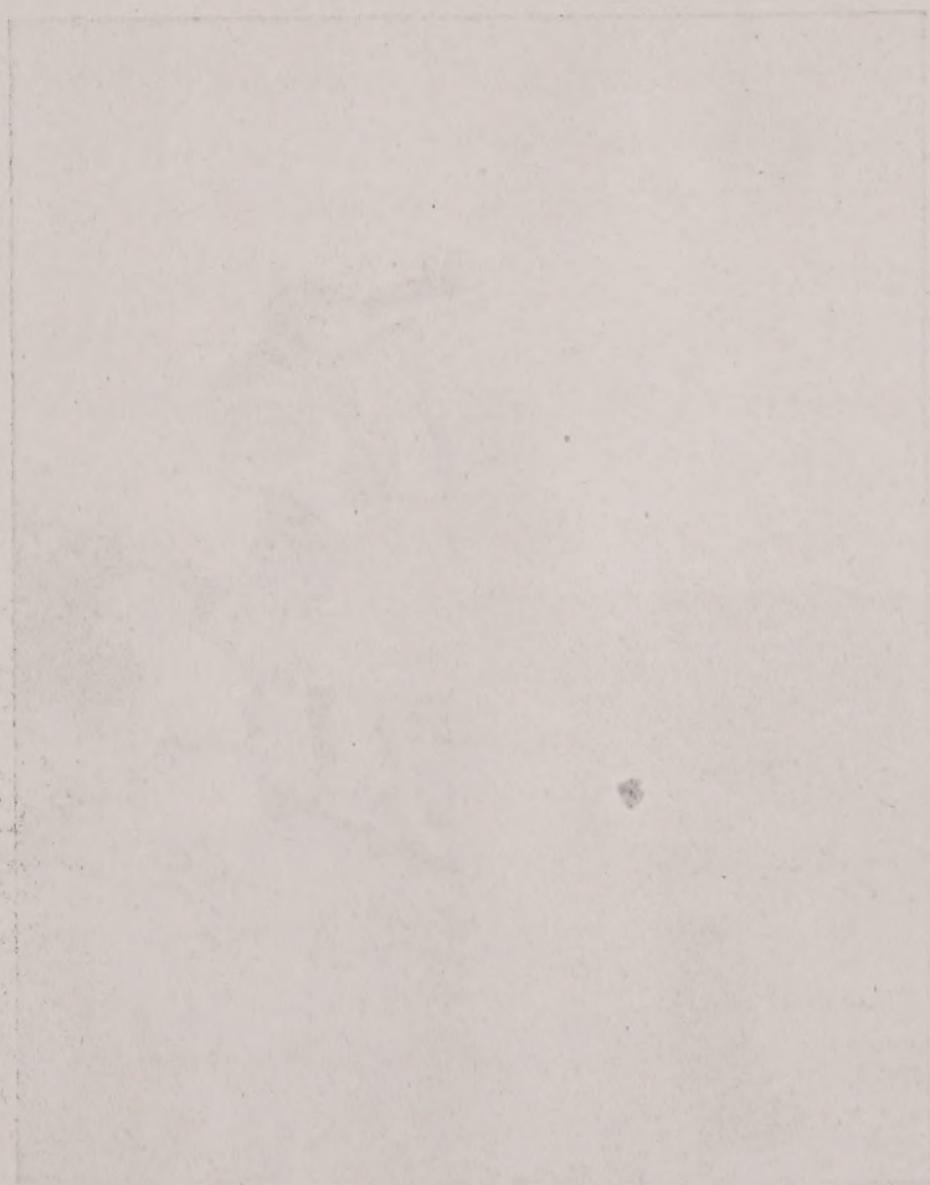
“If any one was at home, we'd have been missed before this, and some one would have come for us,” said Dorothy, “and Nancy, I'm so frightened.”

Nancy's arm tightened about her. “We'll have to stay here until the tide goes out, no matter how long that is,” she said.

At that moment a thought came into Nancy's mind, and Dorothy must have had a similar thought, for as Nancy turned to look at her, she said:



“DON'T YOU *ALMOST* THINK YOU SEE A SAIL?”—Page 186.



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“Do you suppose the water ever really covers this place we’re standing on? Oh, if it *does*, if it *ever* does, a boat must come quick, or—”

“Hush, oh hush!” cried Nancy, “let’s just keep looking, for—oh, it *must* be a boat will pass.”

Sure enough, a boat did indeed pass, and very swiftly, too, but no one on board chanced to look up at the cliff, and the booming of the waves as they dashed against the rocks drowned the sound of their voices so that no one heard their shouts.

“Our voices aren’t strong enough for us to make ourselves heard, even when a passing boat is near the cliff,” wailed Dorothy, “and oh, Nancy, Nancy! Each wave that now comes in rolls higher than the one before!”

There was a sob that she could not restrain, and little Flossie, crouching on the grass behind them, echoed the sob.

Nancy stood firmly erect, her arm around Dorothy. She knew that she must be brave. That the fear that made her shiver *must* not make her cry.

Flossie was softly crying, and Dorothy shivered with terror, and clung to Nancy's arm.

Nancy's lips moved in a little prayer that she might not give way to tears and that help might soon arrive, or at least soon enough to save them. They had forgotten that they were hungry. Their one longing was that they might be rescued before those inrushing waves should engulf the bit of land on which they stood.

Flossie still crouched upon the wiry grass. Dorothy, with Nancy's fond arms about her,

stood watching, hoping that help might come soon, but with the passing moments, the waves seemed as if gaining both force and speed, and now, at times a bit of spray was tossed aloft, and bright drops clung to their clothing.

“Help *must* come soon,” whispered Dorothy.

“Oh, surely,” murmured Nancy, drawing her closer. Flossie said never a word, nor did she look toward the open sea. It frightened her to see the great waves drawing ever nearer, and when they broke against the cliff, she closed her eyes, and a faint cry burst from her lips. Sails passed along on the horizon, too far away to give them any cheer, but not a vessel passed near them.

Suddenly the chug! chug! of a launch startled the three anxious children, as it came puffing around the island just below where

they stood, but no one was on deck but the man at the wheel, and he, keeping his eyes on his course, did not see them, while the clatter of his noisy little craft prevented his hearing their cries.

It seemed the last straw that after waiting so long for a passing craft, the launch should appear, and speed briskly past the spot where they were standing, its owner not so much as glancing toward them. Dorothy and Nancy clasped in each other's arms, were sobbing.

Nancy's hat blew off, and dropped to the waves, where it bobbed and floated like a little boat; she took no notice of that, not even looking after it.

"Hi! I say, hi, up there!" cried a well-known voice, and the three little friends crept to the edge of the cliff, where, in his boat, Antony sat looking up at them, and

holding up Nancy's hat that he had rescued from the crest of the foaming waves.

"Oh, Antony, take us away from this place," cried Dorothy.

"Sure!" cried Antony, "and in less than no time, but not in *The Shell*."

"Oh, *please*, Antony, hurry before the waves wash us off from this land!" Nancy wailed.

"But you can't jump from that rock into this boat without overturning it," Antony said, "but the tide is turning now, and before long you can walk over the piece of rock and sand that you went over when you reached the place where you now are. I'll beach my boat over there in that little bay, and soon the rocks will show through the water. Then I'll come over there and guide you girls over the wet rocks to dry land. You've only a bit longer to wait."

CHAPTER XI

PLAYING "GIANT"

WHEN at last the tide had so far receded that, with Antony's aid, they scrambled over the wet rocks to the dry land, they laughed, yes, laughed and sang snatches of song, so great was their relief from the strain and terror of the long waiting for help to come.

"And to think, Antony, if you hadn't come when you did—and that awful tide had swept us right off into the sea!" said Dorothy.

"But, Dorothy, the tide has never risen high enough to cover that bit of cliff where you girls were standing. My father will tell you that. Only that narrow strip of rock

and sand is under water, even in rough, stormy weather. I wish you had known that, Dorothy, for you look as if the waiting and terror had shaken you."

The earnest look in the boy's dark eyes showed genuine concern, and the soft color that had left Dorothy's cheeks rushed back and flushed them pink.

"You're such a good friend, Antony," she said, "and you've done so many things to help us, I don't know how to thank you."

"You don't need to," Antony said, "for I've been glad enough to be of some use, and 'specially when you girls have been in real danger, or only just frightened."

"Antony never laughs at us when we're frightened," Nancy said, a gratified look in her eyes.

Antony was full of fun, but he never teased girls.

“My father says it’s not manly to tease girls. He says it’s small, and mean, and I’d not care to be either small or mean,” Antony said.

“You never are,” said little Flossie, “and I do think ever and ever so much of you, and even little Elfin says, ‘Antony nice boy.’ ”

“She’s a cute baby,” said Antony, “and I found some odd little shells the other day, and put them in a box for her, but I’ve forgotten them whenever I rowed over to the island. I’m coming over to-night at about five o’clock, and I’ll bring them for her.”

Now that they were safe, they began to feel hungry, and eagerly they begged Antony to stay for lunch, but that could not be, as he was on his way back with orders for the store, when Nancy’s floating hat had been a signal for him to stop and give aid.

They waved to him as he rowed away, and then turned toward home. As they came in sight of the house, they saw the gardener running toward them.

"Oh, now, me foine little ladies! Is it yersilves, er yer shpooks as is coomin' toward me? Be ye real colleens that Oi'm seein', er will ye vanish if Oi tech ye? Oh, sure we'd tought ye losht, shtrayed, or shtolen!"

"It's us, John, just *us*," cried Flossie, "and we've been so scared."

"Shcared, is it? Faith an' it's *us* as has been shcared. The folks away, an' us supposed ter kape an oye on yez, an' ye go an' vanish loike, an' not a shcrap av ye kin we foind. Sure we're all woild, an' the maid, Sue, is sure out av her moind wid the idee that the tree av yez hov been kidnapped. Yis, an'—ah, here she comes now lookin'

loike a woild crature, thot she does. Will, glory be! They're safe, Sue," he cried, "an' we kin now thry ter collect our scathered wits."

"Oh, you blessed dears, come here and tell me where you've been? Where on this island did you get lunch? You've not been seen at either house, and it's almost four o'clock."

"We've not had the least thing to eat," said Dorothy.

"And we'll eat *anything*, only we can't wait for it," said Nancy.

"'Cause we're almost starved!" added Flossie, "and we could tell you all about it better if we weren't so hungry."

"Well, I'll hustle," said Sue, "but when you've eaten, I'll not wait long to know where you've been."

It was astonishing to see biscuits, cold

meat, cake, and hot chocolate disappear, and Sue refrained from asking any questions until their hunger was satisfied, but when the lunch was over she questioned them.

"My, what a happening!" she exclaimed, when Dorothy had told of their long walk, of the sunlight on the cliff, where they had taken turns telling fairy tales, of their watching for a vessel, and then of Antony's coming to their aid.

"And Antony couldn't have heard us over the booming of the waves. It was Nancy's hat that signaled him," said Dorothy.

Of course the story had to be re-told when the others of the household returned, and for days afterward little Elfin, after listening to her favorite stories would ask:

"Now tell 'bout bein' 'way, 'way out where the water kept comin' near, and suffin' awful *almost* happened."

It was nearly a week later when one morning Nancy espied a launch coming from Foam Ridge, and making a very crooked course toward Gem Island.

She called Dorothy, who was playing with little Fluff.

They threw themselves upon the grass, and for a time watched the launch, which evidently was headed for the island, but having much difficulty in reaching it.

Its course resembled the antics of a gay dragon-fly.

For a few moments it would move straight ahead, then it would veer sharply to the right, then as quickly to the left, next it would back, then race forward.

Once it appeared to stop, then swiftly push forward.

“Did you ever see a launch behave like that?” Nancy said, and at that moment

Dorothy laid her hand on Nancy's shoulder.

"Do you suppose that's Susannah?" she asked.

"I wonder if it is," Nancy said, slowly. Fluff pushed in between them, as eager as they to learn who the approaching visitors might be.

After making a zigzag course, during which the little craft stopped several times, turned toward the right and then toward the left, then with a loud "Chug! Chug! Chug!" it bolted forward and finally reached the little pier, backed away, approached sputtering, and then stopped.

No question now as to who had arrived, for Geraldine, Susannah, and Betty Chase were racing toward them.

"We started early so as to have the whole day on this island," said Geraldine, "and really, it's prettier than I thought."

“It is lovely here,” said Betty, “and worth all the terror of trying to reach the island. Really, I wondered if we were going to stop when we were half-way here.”

“Oh, the launch acted a bit queer, but that only made the trip more fun,” said Geraldine. “I could have told Susannah how to steer straight, but I didn’t.”

“Why didn’t you?” Susannah asked.

“I wonder why you kept so still, if all the time you knew how to run it.”

“Oh, you enjoyed having it go every way but straight, so I didn’t say anything,” Geraldine said bluntly.

“Well, I know one thing,” Susannah replied coolly, “and that is that by going zig-zag, I gave you a longer boat-ride than if I’d just come over here straight from Foam Ridge.”

“That’s true enough,” cried Betty, “and

the other thing that is true is that we're actually here."

She laughed, and drew a long breath. It was good to have reached the island safely.

The stiff breeze snatched at her wide-brimmed hat, and as she turned Betty noticed that Susannah was frowning, while Geraldine looked far from pleasant. Nancy also saw it, and she hastened to tell about a book that Mr. Dainty had recently bought for Dorothy, but changing the subject did not drive away the sullen frowns from the faces of the two guests.

Fluff sat beside Dorothy on the coarse grass, and watched Geraldine and Susannah.

He was a great pet, and usually made friends of any new arrivals at the island, but when Geraldine reached a hand to pat him, he backed away.

"What makes him act like that?" she

cried. "I only wanted just to pat him."

She had reached out roughly toward him, and Fluff was used to gentleness. The visit was not beginning pleasantly, and Dorothy felt that something must be done.

"We have a fine place to play ball," she said. "Let's have a game."

Betty agreed, and Geraldine and Susannah looked a bit pleased as they followed Dorothy and Nancy.

It proved to be a lively game, for all were good players, and Fluff barked with delight as he raced from one to the other, chasing the flying ball.

They played until lunch-time.

Mrs. Dainty made them feel warmly welcome, and with Aunt Charlotte "took turns" telling of good times that they had enjoyed when they were little girls. After lunch they walked across the long gallery that

joined the two houses, and called for Flossie Barnet. Flossie gladly joined them.

"Now let's play something that's worth while," Susannah cried, rudely, as if thus far she had found the visit dull.

"We'll let you choose the game," Dorothy said, quietly.

She thought Susannah hard to please, and that if she were allowed to choose the game, she surely would be satisfied.

"I hope you won't choose one that you and I have been playing for weeks," said Geraldine.

"I choose a new game, one I've just thought of, and it will be fun, *great* fun!" declared Susannah.

"I call it, 'The Giant,' and *I'll* be the giant!"

"Good gracious! What a game!" cried Geraldine.

“‘What a game!’” Susannah cried angrily.

“Why do you say that, when you don’t yet know how it is played?”

Geraldine could think of no reply, so Susannah began to explain the game that she claimed to have invented.

It proved to be much like a very old game that they all had played, but neither said so.

“There’s a place I saw when we were coming from the pier this morning,” said Susannah, “and it is a fine place for us to play this game. There’s a clump of bushes that are quite high, and the lower branches bend over so that it looks shadowy in under there. That will be my cave, and I’ll sit in under there, and try to catch you when you pass. Come on! I can hardly wait to play it, it will be such fun.”

Dorothy and Nancy knew that Susan-

nah could snatch at them roughly, but little Flossie, never having played with her, had no idea of what Susannah's hands could do. She ventured a bit too near, and Susannah's first snatch at her muslin dress tore a long piece of the lace from the edge of the ruffle. Dorothy's light frock fared the same, while Nancy's pump was wrenched from her foot.

"Who cares for a few tears in our clothes," cried Geraldine, in her usual boasting way. "This really is my best dress," she continued, "but who is afraid of tearing it. I can have plenty more."

"And now," cried Susannah, springing out from under the bushes, "we'll play the rest of the game. At first I thought I'd pull you into my cave and make believe eat you, but I've changed my mind. I'll take you all out in the launch, and just make believe

push you overboard. Why, how funny you look! Of course I wouldn't truly do it. I only mean just *play* I did."

"But I wouldn't want even to play that," Dorothy said.

"Well, I wonder if you're afraid to play the rest of the game?" said Susannah.

"I am, Susannah," said Flossie, "and I don't care how much you laugh."

"Come, Geraldine," cried Susannah, her cheeks an angry red, and her eyes flashing, "we may as well go home. It's awfully dull here."

"I don't want to go back with you, Susannah," said Geraldine.

"Well, what an idea!" Susannah fairly screamed. "Even you, Geraldine, are a 'fraidie cat!'"

"I know we came near not reaching here

this morning," Geraldine said, "and I'll not venture out in that launch again unless your father is running it."

"You're wise, Geraldine," said Betty Chase, as she tried to pin her belt in place. Susannah had torn it half off from the skirt.

"How will you go back to Foam Ridge?" Susannah asked.

"There's the answer to your question," said Betty, and she laughed as she pointed to Antony, who was rowing toward the little bay where he usually moored his boat.

Susannah turned her head.

"Oh, well, if you and Geraldine prefer his boat and his company, I'll not urge you to go back on the launch," she said, and then she ran at top speed to the little pier, was aboard the launch, and off before Antony had beached his boat. Oddly enough, the

launch kept a straight course for about half the distance to Foam Ridge. Then those upon the pier saw it stop.

“That’s just the way it acted this morning when we were coming here,” said Betty. “It would go along smoothly for a time, and then it would stop, and then go on again.”

“With the difference this time, that it isn’t going to start!” Nancy said.

“Oh, look!” cried Dorothy. “It’s just as Nancy said, and what *is* Susannah trying to do?”

Susannah was standing, and then, as they watched, they saw her climb to the roof of the tiny cabin, wildly waving her arms. Antony turned *The Shell*, and rowed back toward the launch.

The little friends at Gem Island watched, and soon they saw Antony’s boat alongside the launch.

They saw Susannah stamp her foot, and then, a second after, *The Shell* was flying over the waves toward the mainland.

"Antony has gone to get help," said Dorothy, "and oh, I am so glad you girls reached here safely this morning."

"We're glad, too," said Betty, "but what are we to do if Antony doesn't come over here?"

"That's easy enough to answer," said Geraldine, "we'll stay here all night."

"You surely will," agreed Dorothy and Nancy, as if with one voice, delighted with the thought of prolonging Betty's visit, even though Geraldine must also be a guest.

CHAPTER XII

AT THE GIFT SHOP

ALITTLE later, when Antony reached the Island, he was closely questioned as to what had happened to the launch, and he laughed as he answered their queries.

“You should have seen Susannah!” he cried, “for she was scared, and not afraid to show it. Did you see her up on the roof of the little cabin? She was trying to signal to some one, with no one in sight! Could you beat that?”

“I saw her the moment I got well on my way to this island, and I rowed alongside.

“She said she could not make the launch stir, so I went back to Foam Ridge, and the first person I met was Mr. Searles.

“Say, girls! He was the maddest man I ever saw.

“It seems that he had told Susannah never to go out in that launch unless he or Saxon were with her. Saxon can run that launch as well as he runs their car.

“Mr. Searles chartered a tug-boat, and old Captain Binder says he’s sure Susannah couldn’t help understanding what the scolding meant that her father gave her, because he made it so ‘*tur’ble plain.*’ ”

Antony took the girls back to Foam Ridge in *The Shell*.

Betty was glad to go because she knew that to remain at the Island meant anxiety for her dear ones at the cottage, but Geraldine, who had invited herself to remain over night, greatly regretted Antony’s return.

It would have been delightful to her to remain on the Island all night, and return

the next morning to find her aunt completely upset with excitement, and even the servants, who were not very fond of her, somewhat frightened.

.

Mr. Dainty and Uncle Harry had returned to the Island, and every one, accordingly, felt very safe and happy. Nancy, searching for Dorothy, found her standing on the bluff and looking out over the sea while the fresh breeze tossed her bright hair and twitched the broad brim of her hat. She seemed very much absorbed.

“A penny to know what you’re thinking of,” cried Nancy.

“I’m just standing here, looking out over the water, and everything looks bright and beautiful,” Dorothy said, “but through the sunny haze out there I seem to see the great garden at the stone house, the fountains, the

flowers, and the shady places where we play.”

Nancy looked at her thoughtfully.

“Are you beginning to long for home?” she asked.

“Oh, no,” Dorothy said, with a laugh. “It is too lovely here for that, but it is a happy thought that keeps flitting through my mind.

“It is that while we enjoy being here on this fine little island, we’ve a lovely home to go to, and pleasant friends besides.”

Little Fluff looked out across the waves, then up at Dorothy as if he wondered what they were talking about.

They did not hear soft footsteps behind them, so Elfin startled them when she spoke.

“He won’t keep step with me!” she said, pointing to Fluff. “He don’t even *try* to.”

“Oh, you cunning baby!” said Dorothy. “Why don’t you keep step with him?”

“*Could I?*” Elfin asked soberly.

“Let’s see you try,” Nancy said, laughing, as she placed Fluff beside the tiny girl.

Fluff, not at all sure as to what was expected of him, took a few steps forward, Elfin did the same.

Then, sure that there was some joke about it, he darted off at top speed, barking as he went.

“How tould any one keep up wiv him?” cried Elfin, in disgust.

“He don’t wait a minute.”

A maid, who had followed her, took her by the hand, saying as she turned toward the house:

“It’s like the wee dog she would be walking now, and but an hour ago it was a gull she would be.

“Sure, didn’t I find her flapping her arms

up and down, and wondering why she couldn't fly? Sure she keeps me busy."

Elfin looked back, laughing.

"I'm not a gull row," she cried, "I'm just me, 'at's all."

Dorothy and Nancy were still looking out across the sea when a cheery voice hailed them:

"Hey, little mates! Will you come for a cruise with me?"

Flossie clung to his hand, and she now ran ahead to urge the invitation that Uncle Harry had given.

"Indeed we will," was the eager response, Dorothy adding:

"We'll be ready just as soon as we can get our sweaters, and change these big sailor hats for 'tams' that will stay on."

It proved quite a cruise on which he took

them, far out beyond Pirate Bar, and out to where they could see a lighthouse that they had never seen from Gem Island.

“It is not long before we shall be back in Merrivale,” said Uncle Harry, “and we all love our homes there, but once in a while we shall think of the lovely little island and I think we shall long for the salt sea air.”

“And we’ll talk over the happenings here,” Dorothy said.

“Yes, and we’ll often think how the stories about ‘Pirate Bar’ frightened us until afterward, when we found it was all a hoax.”

“Mollie Merton will be glad to see us,” Nancy said, “and the first thing she will say will be:

“‘Now tell me every bit of Gem Island news.’”

“And we’ll tell her all about the happenings,” said Flossie.

“Indeed we will,” Nancy agreed.

“I’m glad we are to be at the stone house long before it is really autumn,” Dorothy said, “because we have time to enjoy the flowers while they are still lovely and untouched by the frost.”

“And we shall have weeks and weeks to drive the pony, Romeo, before it is cold enough to get out the pretty sleigh,” she added, “but isn’t it hard to say where we are happiest, when it is so lovely on Gem Island, and so dear at home?”

“I like to be *anywhere* where you are, Dorothy,” Nancy said, softly.

“I know it,” Dorothy whispered.

Flossie now returned to her seat beside them.

“I’ve been asking Uncle Harry how long he intends to be ashore at Foam Ridge before taking us back to Gem Island, and he

says we can have a whole hour to 'go shopping.' "

"Let's get some pretty things to take home to the girls at Merrivale for souvenirs," said Nancy.

"That will be fine, and an hour will give us plenty of time to choose carefully," Dorothy said.

There was one store that the little friends dearly loved to visit, and they felt sure that there they could find the very gifts they wished.

Uncle Harry smiled as he listened while they chattered as to just what would be the best gift for each of their playmates.

A quaint little man kept the "Gift Shop," and he especially enjoyed his little customers.

When, after a long cruise, they reached the pier at Foam Ridge, they raced toward

the shop, as if they thought it might vanish if they did not hasten.

“Oh—o-o! Just see this little box all made of *teenty* shells! I’ll get that for Mollie Merton. I know she’ll like it!” cried Flossie.

“Is there another like it?” Dorothy asked eagerly. “I’d so like to have it.”

The little man searched his shelves. “Yes, little Miss, here is one exactly like it,” he said as he set it on the counter.

Dorothy’s eyes shone with delight. “I’d like this little round box that has a wee velvet pincushion on the top. I know some one who would surely like that,” Dorothy said.

“Oh, that is a pretty gift,” said Flossie. “Who is that for?”

“For Arabella,” Dorothy said.

“That’s right, Dorothy,” Uncle Harry said as he joined them. “Arabella is odd

sometimes, but she is really trying now to be more kindly, and I think she will be so delighted with your little gift that she will really show that she is pleased."

Nancy chose a lovely shell with rose and pale green tints in its pearly surface. It was mounted on a slender gilt standard, and Katie Dean would surely find it useful as a pin-tray on her bureau.

The boys were not forgotten.

Fine little paper-cutters carved from shell made useful gifts, and Reginald Dean, Jack Tiverton, and Leander Correyville were sure to like them, Uncle Harry said.

The hour for shopping had flown on wings, and they hurried along the beach toward the pier, chatting of the gifts that they had chosen.

That night after dinner, they were all sitting before the great fireplace where a log-

fire blazed and crackled, sending a thousand glittering sparks up the chimney. They were talking again of the souvenirs that they had chosen at the gift shop.

There was a pause, and then Dorothy spoke.

“Antony is always seeing the sort of things that we have bought. Our friends at Merri- vale will like them, but he wouldn’t care for them, and yet I can’t help wishing that I had a nice gift for him, he has been so kind to us, and there’s one *big, brave* thing that he did for us.

“Oh, I do truly wish we had a gift for him.”

“I think as you do, Dorothy,” Mr. Dainty said, “and I have chosen a gift for Antony that I believe he will value.”

He left the room, returning in a few moments with a small package.

“Come, Dorothy, come, all, and see if you think I have chosen wisely.”

He opened a fine leather case displaying a handsome watch of which any lad might be proud. Inside the watch-case was engraved Antony’s name, and the date, and this sentiment:

“This watch is presented as a mark of my esteem.

“RUDOLPH DAINTY.”

“Oh, won’t he be delighted?” cried Dorothy.

“And think of his surprise,” said Nancy, “for Antony never expects any reward for what he does. He just does things because he likes to be obliging.”

“And *once* he was very brave,” said Mr. Dainty, “and it is in recognition of his in-

valuable service on that special occasion that I present my gift to him.

“I’ve waited until I felt that I knew what Antony would like best to have. His father makes a comfortable living, and the boy is well cared for and well dressed. It was hard to learn his wishes, because the lad seldom expresses a desire for anything, seeming always content with what he already has. A few days ago, I knew what my gift to him would be.

“I was on the pier at Foam Ridge, Antony beside me. When I took out my watch to learn the time, the boy’s big, black eyes sparkled.

“‘One of the first things I’ll buy when I’m a man,’ he said, softly, and a world of eagerness was in the words, and I knew what my gift would be.”

“It’s a fine gift,” Aunt Charlotte said.

“I can almost see his twinkling eyes as they will look when he sees it,” Mrs. Dainty said. “But, Rudolph, what about a chain? Not too large a chain, but one that would look right for a boy to wear.”

“That is my part,” said a cheery voice, and Uncle Harry came in to join the group before the fire.

“Oh, please let us see it,” said Dorothy. “It is so sweet to know about gifts that are to make other folks happy.”

“Dear little Dorothy,” Uncle Harry said, drawing her closer, while from his pocket he produced a little package which proved to be just the right sort of chain for the watch. After the watch and chain had been duly inspected, and admired, Nancy said:

“I bought one gift to-day, and I was puzzled what to choose.

“It’s easy to guess what the girls and boys

will like, but this was for some one else, and—well, it's for Mrs. Armitage, the dear old lady who loaned us costumes for our pageant, and *gave* one to me. I do wish you'd say if you think she would like this."

Nancy had chosen a ribbon book-mark with tiny pearl shells on its ends.

"She is always reading," Nancy said, "and these two long ribbons joined with a shell will keep two places in a book. She told me she often lost her place when she had been reading, and laid the book aside."

"Why, Nancy, dear, that is a very nice gift," Aunt Charlotte said. "I am glad you remembered her. She will be so pleased."

The wind was rising, and around the corner of the house it loudly whistled.

"You look as if your thoughts were weighty," Uncle Harry said, as he turned toward Dorothy. "Say, dear, would you

tell them to a solemn person like Uncle H?"

"Oh, you are never, *never*, solemn," she said, "and I'll tell you because you couldn't guess them if you tried. I was thinking of the gardens at Merrivale, and wondering if the flowers were blowing in the wind, and if the breeze whistled as loudly around the corners of the Stone House as it is whistling here."

"Longing for home?" he asked.

"Not really longing," Dorothy said, slowly. "When we go to a fine summer place, I enjoy every minute of the time that we are there, and I hardly think of home until it is nearly time to go, and then, instead of fretting because we are soon to leave the summer place, I begin to think of all the pleasant things that we'll enjoy at home."

"That's right, dear," Uncle Harry said, "and it is right, because it means that you

intend to be content, wherever you may be."

Uncle Harry rose, and walked over to the piano.

"I was about to ask for a song," Mrs. Dainty said.

"And you shall have it," said Uncle Harry, "and it shall be one that will blend well with what Dorothy has been saying, for it breathes of content."

He played a short prelude, and then gayly he sang:

"Fling care to the winds!
This is no time for sorrow.
The bright sun may bring us
A fair day to-morrow.
If the day chance be dull,
Only churls would be grieving.
Let merry thoughts in, and
Dull care will be leaving.

"Warm the heart of another
With wee bit of kindness.
Stretch a hand toward a brother,
Don't simulate blindness!

You'll be glad when you've helped him,
Aye, glad past believing.
There'll be joy in your heart,
And dull care will be leaving."

"Sing it again! Sing it again!" they cried, and he laughed as he granted their eager request.

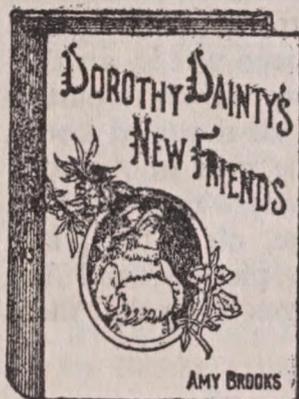
There would be a few more days at lovely Gem Island, and then they would return to Merrivale, to the Stone House with its great gardens, its flowers and the fountains that seemed always at play. Already they were looking forward to the glad days ahead.

Those who would like to follow Dorothy and Nancy to the Stone House, to enjoy their pleasures, to read of the exciting happenings at Merrivale, of dear little Flossie, of Uncle Harry's fun, and of the hidden cave that Jack Tiverton found, may find all these things, and many more in "DOROTHY DAINTY'S RED LETTER DAYS."

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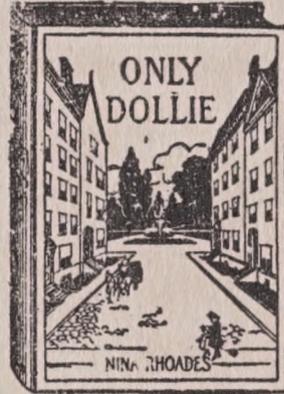
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