The Spanish Chest

Edna A. Brown

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[Illustration: WHAT IS IS THIS TINY DOTTED LINE ACROSS THE GROUNDS? WIN INQUIRED]

THE SPANISH CHEST

BY

EDNA A. BROWN

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN GOSS AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF FLORENCE AND CLARA

who shared a winter spent in the Channel Islands and have now gone on a longer journey.

This little book I wrote for thee
Thy friendly eyes will never see.
It was not meant for critics' reading,
Nor for the world that scans unheeding.
For there are lines washed in with tears,
As well as nonsense, mocking fears.
Alas! thine eyes will never see
This little book I wrote for thee.

THE SPANISH CHEST

FOREWORD

Once upon a time a clever Japanese artist drew a sketch of a man who sat industriously painting, when, to his great amazement, all the little figures on his canvas came to life and began to walk out of the picture.

Something like that happened to this book. Books grow, you know, because somebody thinks so hard about the different characters that gradually they turn into lifelike people, who often insist on doing things that weren't expected. When this especial book began to grow, two persons who hadn't been invited, came and wanted to be in the story.

The author politely remarked that they were grown−up and couldn't expect to be in a book for young people.

They said that they were not so very grown−up, only twenty−three and a half and that they still knew how to play.

Connie said that her home was in the Island of Jersey where the story was going to be, and if she came in, she could make things much more pleasant for the other characters.

Max said that the story would go to smash without him, because he should be needed at an important moment.

So, because they looked most wistful and promised very earnestly to behave as though they were nice children, and not be silly, the author said they might have a share in the story.

Connie at once offered to lend her collie. So that is how the beach dog happens to be in the book.

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CHAPTER I. AT ROSE VILLA

The silence in the little drawing−room had lasted for some moments before being broken by the man seated in the big wicker chair. His dress indicated a clergyman of the Church of England, his face betrayed lines of kindliness and forbearance, but its present expression showed a perplexity not unmixed with disapproval.

I suppose, Miss Pearce, he said at length, there is no use in trying further to dissuade you from your plan, and of course it may work out for the best. But you will excuse me, my dear, for I have daughters of my own you seem too young to undertake a lodging−house. Now a position as governess in a nice family

Estelle Pearce interrupted him quickly.

There is Edith, you know. Should I try teaching, it would mean separation from her. And I *must* keep Edith with me. We have only each other now. No, Mr. Angus, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your interest in us, but I am sure it is best to try my plan. You see I have the house on my hands. When we came to Jersey, Father leased it for the winter and I can't afford to forfeit thirty pounds. And there is Nurse as well as Annette. Surely Nurse lends dignity to any family. But I am older than you think, she ended with a smile and a pretty blush. I am twenty− four, Mr. Angus.

A kindly look came into the eyes bent on her slender, black−robed figure. You do not look it, my dear, her visitor said after a pause. Well, with two good servants, the plan may be successful. Much depends on what class of lodgers comes your way. I am told that Americans are rather desirable inmates, that they pay well and are not exacting. If you could let your rooms to some refined American ladies, things might adjust themselves very satisfactorily. To be sure, few Americans visit the Channel Islands; they are given to wandering farther afield. But I will speak of your plans to the postmaster and one or two others. It might be advisable to put a card in the circulating library at St. Helier's. Rest assured that both Mrs. Angus and I will do all we can for your father's girls. Lionel and I were good friends at Oxford though we saw so little of each other afterwards. I did not think when he wrote me scarcely six weeks ago that it was to be Hail and Farewell.

I must go, he added quickly, seeing that Estelle's eyes were brimming. Where is Edith? I hoped to see her also.

She has gone to the sands, replied Estelle. It is dull for her, moping here, so I sent her for an errand and told her to run down and see whether the tide had turned. She begins school on Monday.

Mr. Angus took his leave, and still looking doubtful, went down the steps of Rose Villa, a quaint little house, covered with tinted plaster, as is the pretty custom of the Channel Islands, and appearing even to a masculine ignorance of details much more neat and attractive than its neighbors.

So Mr. Angus thought, as he turned from his puzzled survey of its exterior, to walk slowly down the short street at the end of which glittered the waters of the English Channel.

The tide was on the turn but the expanse of sandy beach lay yet broad. Far toward St. Helier's the curve of the port showed the high sea−wall, for this same innocent−looking tide that ebbs and leaves behind miles of sandy stretches and rocks, can return with force sufficient to dash over even the lofty breakwater and surprise the placid Jerseymen at times, by scattering large stones in the esplanade.

But here at St. Aubin's the curve of Noirmont Point sheltered the little town from the full force of the waves. Dr. Angus looked from the end of Noirmont Terrace straight down to the sands and saw in the distance the sunset air filled with wheeling gulls, a group of boys playing football on the wide level, and somewhat nearer, a slender girl of fourteen, dressed in black, with long fair hair floating over her shoulders.

She was walking slowly and the kind clergyman attributed her leisurely pace to dejection, but as a matter of fact, Edith was feeling quite happy and much interested in the tiny bright yellow snail shells the beach was providing for entertainment. She had been spared all that was possible of the depression and sorrow of the past weeks. Daddy had been poorly for years and Edith could not remember him as ever well and strong. His loss affected her more because it grieved Estelle, the only mother she had known.

There had been a few sad confused days when nothing seemed real, and strangers had been kind in a way that Estelle accepted with a sort of resentful patience, plain even to Edith. But since then, life had been rather cheerful, with a great deal of attention from Nurse, and Estelle's time almost wholly given to her. It was gratifying to share Sister's confidence and to help arrange the rooms attractively for the possible delightful people who ought to come to lodge with them.

That they might not be delightful, Sister would not admit for a moment, so of course they would be. St. Aubin's itself was far more desirable as a place of residence than the noisy Exeter street where Edith had spent much of her life. Far back in the past she could just remember a charming Surrey village with a pretty vine−covered church where Daddy used to preach. She could recall exactly how her fat legs dangled helplessly from the high pew seat. Directly behind sat a stout farmer with four sons. The boys made faces at Edith on the sly; their mother sometimes gave her peppermints.

Edith's thoughts had wandered rather far afield, though still alert for any gleam of the yellow shells, when she arrived opposite Noirmont Terrace and reluctantly left the sands. A light shone from the drawing−room and she knew that Annette would be bringing in supper, and Sister would be found poring over a little account book with a don't speak just now look in her eyes.

But Estelle proved to be waiting at the open door and as Edith began to run on catching sight of her, she thought that Sister somehow looked happier.

Did you meet Mr. Angus? Estelle inquired. He went toward the sands.

I saw him in the distance, replied Edith. Why, Star, you look like like a star, she ended laughing. Was Mr. Angus agreeable? Did he say you oughtn't to take people?

I think he doesn't wholly disapprove now, answered Estelle gently. And he is going to do what he can toward sending pleasant lodgers. Wouldn't it be nice if some dear old ladies should come and want to stay with us all winter?

Just ladies? queried Edith. Do they have to be old?

I shouldn't take gentlemen, said Estelle. Nurse wouldn't approve, and ladies would be pleasanter. Perhaps there might be a young mother and some ducky little children. How would you like that?

Much better, responded Edith. I don't want any fussy old freaks with false fronts and shawls. They'd expect to be read aloud to and waited on within an inch of their lives. I'd like some babies to take down to dig and paddle. Do say you'll have children, Sister.

Well, as a matter of fact, I think we'll have to take the people who want to come, replied Estelle sensibly. Let's just hope that somebody very nice will think we'd be nice to stay with. Come in now, Edith. Annette has shrimps for supper and after we are finished, we will put a card in the window and see what happens next.

But the little white card that most modestly announced Lodgings" remained in the drawing−room casement for a week, and every day as Edith came from school, she looked anxiously to see whether it was gone. Its absence would mean that some one had looked at the rooms with approval.

One afternoon as she came up the Terrace, the sight of an unknown face at an upper window sent a thrill down her back. The card was yet in evidence but the presence of strangers indicated that some one had felt attracted by Rose Villa. Yes, there was a cab at the door.

As Edith entered quietly a voice struck her ear, struck it unpleasantly, an English voice, high−pitched and rather supercilious.

I should require to see your kitchen, Miss Pearce, and your servants. I am most particular. In fact, I must be free at any time to inspect the scullery. There must be a definite arrangement about Marmaduke's meals. He likes a light breakfast with plenty of cream, and for dinner a chop or a bit of chicken. His dinner must be served with my

luncheon. Then for tea

I am afraid my servants would be unwilling to cook especially for a dog, interposed Estelle's voice, courteous but with a chilling tone Edith had never suspected it possessed. It is useless for you to consider the lodgings.

Oh, your rooms are very passable, said the voice. Small, of course, and underfurnished, but some pictures and antimacassars would take off that bare look. And Marmaduke is adorable. Your cook would soon be devotion itself. Why, at my last lodgings

I really cannot undertake the care of a pet animal, said Estelle firmly. I hope to have other lodgers and his presence might be objectionable to them. You will excuse me now, as I have an engagement. I will ring for Nurse to show you out.

Well, really, Miss Pearce, began the voice, but Nurse appeared on the scene so promptly that one might have suspected her of being all the time within hearing distance. Edith scuttled into the drawing−room, just avoiding a very large, over−dressed person, who came ponderously down the stairs, a moppy white dog festooned over one arm. Her face was red and perspiring and she seemed to be indignantly struggling with feelings too strong for words. Edith could not suppress a stifled laugh as she was ushered from the house in Nurse's grandest manner.

Emerging from her refuge, Edith saw Estelle on the landing, her face pale except for a tiny red spot on either cheek, her eyes unnaturally bright.

My word, Star! said Edith, giggling, didn't you get rid of her finely? What a fearful person!

She was impossible, said Estelle. Oh, Nurse, she exclaimed impetuously, seeing the old family servant still lingering in the hall, do you suppose only people like that will want lodgings?

No, indeed, my lamb, replied Nurse, casting a glance of satisfaction after the cab disappearing from the terrace. Don't you fret, Miss Star, and don't you take the first people who come. Just bide your time, and there'll be some quality who will be what you ought to have.

Mr. Angus thought Americans might be rather desirable, said Estelle hesitatingly. To prepare Nurse for such a possibility might be wise.

Nurse pursed her lips significantly. Well, it's not for me to disagree with the reverend gentleman, she remarked. And I haven't been in contact with Americans. No doubt they're well enough in their country, but I hope, Miss Star, it'll be some of our people that want to come. Now an elderly couple or some middle−aged ladies would be quite suitable and proper, but Americans Well, I don't know.

Nurse shook her head dubiously as she left the room. Edith came to put her arms about Estelle.

What a fearful woman that was! she repeated, drawing her sister toward the window. Poor Star, I'm sorry you had to talk to her. Rooms underfurnished, indeed! And you tried so hard not to have them crowded and messed with frightful crocheted wool things. She'd want a tidy on every chair and extra ones for Sunday. And you've made things so pretty, Star!

We think so, don't we! replied Estelle, kissing her little comforter. Somebody may yet come who will agree with us. We won't give up hope.

Estelle was silent for a moment. She did not want Edith to suspect how very necessary it was that those rooms should prove attractive to somebody.

Is that the Southampton boat just rounding the point? she added. She's extremely late.

They must have had a rough passage, agreed Edith, looking at the steamer ploughing into the smooth water of St. Aubin's bay. Let's put a wish on her, Star. Let's wish, *hard*, that she has on board the nicest people that ever were and that they're coming straight out here and say they'd like to spend the winter with us!

CHAPTER II. FRAN ENGAGES LODGINGS

I positively refuse, said Mrs. Thayne, to go out again to−day. And I wish you wouldn't go either, Wingate, she added to her older son. That steamer trip was frightful. What a night we did have! As for you two, she went on to Frances and Roger, I suppose you won't be happy until you are off for an exploring expedition, but I don't see how you can feel like it.

Why, Mother, I wasn't seasick, said Roger, a handsome, mischievous−looking boy about twelve. I slept like a log till I heard Win being hmm unhappy. That woke me but I turned over and didn't know anything more till daylight.

I shouldn't have been sick if you hadn't begun it, Mother, observed Frances, turning from the window overlooking the esplanade. I feel all right now. Mayn't Roger and I go down on the beach or take a car ride? she asked, eagerly.

I don't imagine there are any electric cars on the island, said Mrs. Thayne.

But out here is a funny little steam tram marked St. Aubin's, interposed Frances. It's going somewhere. Look at the dinky cars with a kind of balcony and that speck of an engine.

That's a pony engine for sure, drawled Win, joining his sister at the window. Except that he was thin and fragile no one could have known from Win's clever, merry dark face, how greatly he was handicapped by a serious heart trouble. But the contrast between his tall, loosely−knit figure and Fran's compact little person brought a wistful expression into Mrs. Thayne's observant eyes. Win was seventeen and had never been able to play as other boys did. Probably all his life would be different, yet he was so plucky and brave over his limitations.

There's the *Lydia* down in the harbor, exclaimed Frances. My, didn't she wiggle around last night!

Lydia, Lydia, why dost thou tremble?
Answer me true.
Traveler, traveler, I'll not dissemble,
'Tis but the screw.

Lydia, Lydia, why this commotion?
Answer me quick.
Traveler, traveler, 'tis but a notion.
You must be sick!

drawled Win, following the direction of his sister's glance.

Win, how bright of you! she exclaimed. I wish I could think of things like that. But, Mother, mayn't we go out and take that little train wherever it's going?

Yes, I suppose so, agreed Mrs. Thayne. Take care of Fran, Roger, and don't get separated. You might notice any attractive places offering lodgings. We don't want to stay in this hotel all winter and the sooner we are settled the better.

Come along, Fran, exclaimed Roger. That infant train is getting a move on.

The two tore impetuously from the sitting−room. Such energy! Mrs. Thayne remarked with a sigh. Will you lie down here, Win?

No, I think I'll write a bit, replied her son. I'm not so done up as you are, Mother.

Why Roger wasn't ill after the strange combination of food he ate at Winchester last evening is a miracle, remarked Mrs. Thayne. Were you planning to write to Father?

I will, replied her son. Mother, do go and rest. You look like the latter end of a wasted life. But I hope the kids will light on some lodgings. I've had enough of hotels. Nothing on earth is so deadly dull and so deadly respectable as a first−class English hotel.

Why, of course it is respectable, said Mrs. Thayne, looking rather puzzled.

Thunder, yes! But it's so *fearfully* proper! That head−waiter down−stairs, with his side−whiskers and his velvet tread and his confidential voice why, when he came to take my order, I wanted to pull his hair or do something to turn him into a human being.

Mrs. Thayne smiled. Much as she loved Win, she did not always understand him. Shut out from active sports, Win had early taken refuge in the world of books and his quick perceptions were often those of a mature mind.

When his mother had gone into her room, Win settled himself by the west window overlooking the bay where Castle Elizabeth rose on its rock in the middle distance. Win looked at it approvingly, promising himself later the fun of finding out its history and present use. Just now, he would devote himself to getting the family journal up to date for Father, on duty with the *Philadelphia*, somewhere near Constantinople. It was to be on the same side of the Atlantic that the Thaynes had come to England and a slight attack of bronchitis on Win's part had resulted in this additional trip. Jersey was reported to possess a mild climate as well as good schools where Roger and Frances might have new and probably interesting experiences. Win himself was not equal to school routine, but there would doubtless be some tutor available to give him an hour or two every day, a pleasant and easy task for some young man, for Win was always eager to study when health permitted.

Deep in his heart was the ever−present regret that he could not enter Annapolis nor follow in the footsteps of his father, but if an elder brother had any influence, Roger was going into the naval service. At present, Roger showed no inclination to such a future, and was but mildly interested in his father's career, but Captain Thayne and Win shared an unspoken hope that a change would come with the passing years.

For some time after finishing his letter, Win sat with eyes on Castle Elizabeth, idly speculating about the coming winter. This old−world island, with its differing customs and ancient traditions seemed a place where most interesting things might happen, a land of romance and fairy gold, offering possibilities of strange adventure. Just because Win was debarred from most boyish fun, his mind turned eagerly to deeds of daring. Visions of pirates, smugglers, and buried hoards often danced through his brain, and the least suggestion of any mystery was enough to excite his keen interest. That hoary old castle on its island proved a source of many romantic ideas to Win, who presently fell into a day−dream.

The sun set in crimson splendor behind the castle towers and Win's reverie changed to genuine slumber from which he was roused by the reappearance of Mrs. Thayne.

I'm sorry I waked you, she said. I didn't notice that you were asleep.

Why, I didn't know I was, said Win lazily. I must have been dreaming and yet I thought I was awake. It was such an odd dream about a young man or rather a boy, in queer clothes ornamented with silver buttons and wearing his hair in curls over his shoulders. I was following him somewhere through a passage, very dark and narrow. Then suddenly we were in a room with a big fireplace and books around the walls. It was a beautiful old room but I never remember seeing a place like it. Some other people came, all men, also in queer clothes and very quiet and serious. On a table was food of some kind and this boy I had been following began to eat but the others stood about, apparently consulting over something. Then I woke. Wasn't it a crazy dream? Oh, the reason we were in that passage was because something was lost. I don't know what it was nor how I knew it was lost but we were trying to find it.

That was odd. You must have read something that suggested it, Mrs. Thayne began, just as Fran and Roger came into the room, bursting with suppressed excitement. For a few moments they talked in a duet.

Mother, it's lovely over at St. Aubin's, ever so much nicer than here, Fran began breathlessly, her brown eyes sparkling. And such a funny little train running along the esplanade!

You couldn't believe there was such a beach, put in Roger. Why, the tide goes out forever, clear to the horizon! Fellows were playing football down there, two games. How much does this tide rise, Win?

This book I've been reading says forty feet, replied his brother.

And the houses! Fran went on breathlessly, all colors, cream and brown and blue and pink.

Oh, draw it mild, Sis, interrupted Win. I should admire a pink house.

It's out there, said Frances, and what's more, it's very pretty!

That's right, corroborated Roger. Wouldn't a pink house look something fierce at home? But here it's swell and kind of of appropriate, he ended lamely.

And flowers, Mother, Frances took up the tale. *Hedges* of fuchsia, real live tall hedges, not measly little potted plants. Geraniums as tall as I am, and ever so many roses and violets. Oh, and we've found some lodgings. You're to see them to−morrow.

Frances! exclaimed her horrified mother. You haven't been in strange houses, inspecting rooms?

Why, you told us to look for them, didn't you, Mother? replied her astonished and literal daughter. Roger was with me. It was perfectly all right.

I simply meant you to notice from the outside any attractive houses that advertised lodgings, explained Mrs. Thayne. Well she ended helplessly, I suppose there's no harm done.

Why, no, Frances agreed. What could happen? Let me tell you about them. We took the baby cars and got off at St. Aubin's because that especial train didn't go any farther. It's lovely there, Mother, and plenty of lodgings to let. We walked along and saw one house that looked pleasant, so we went up and rang and a maid showed us into a parlor. We knew right off we didn't want to come there, because the place was so dark and stuffy and there were

fourteen hundred family photographs and knit woolen mats and such things around. I was going to sit down but just as I got near the chair, it was rather dark, you see, something said 'Hello!' and there was a horrid great parrot sitting on the back of the chair. I jumped about a foot.

You screamed, too, said Roger.

I may have exclaimed, admitted Frances judicially. It was not a scream. If I had yelled, you would have known it. Well, a messy old woman came who called me 'dear,' but when I said I didn't believe my mother would care for the rooms, she got huffy and said she was accustomed to rent her rooms to ladies, only she pronounced it *lydies*.

We left that place, went on Frances, paying no attention to the look of silent endurance on her mother's face, and walked some distance without seeing anything we liked. But suddenly we came to a tiny street going down to the sea. There were only six houses and one had a card in the window. They faced the bay and just big rocks were on the other side of the street. Now, listen.

Frances went on dramatically. The house with the card was the dearest thing, all cream−color and green, with a pink rambler rose perfectly enormous, growing 'way up to the eaves, and a rough roof of red tiles and steep gables. The windows were that dinky kind that open outward and had little bits of panes. Everything was clean as clean, the steps and the curtains and the glass. While we were looking, the door opened and a girl came out. She was about my age, Mother, but *so* pretty, with gray eyes and yellow hair and *such* a complexion. I'd give anything to look like her.

Frances shook her head with disapproval over her own brown hair and eyes. To be sure the one was curly and the others straightforward and earnest, while her gipsy little face and figure were considered attractive by most people and by those who loved her, very satisfactory indeed.

Well, this girl came out and we sort of smiled at each other and I asked if that card meant that there were rooms to let. I told her you were seasick, and at the hotel, and my brother and I saw the card and we were looking for lodgings and all the rest, you know. She said yes, there were rooms and she'd call Sister.

Sister came and she was a love, tall and sweet and just beautiful, only she looked sad and wore a black dress. The younger girl went away but Sister showed us the rooms and they are just what we'd like, I'm sure. There wasn't any messy wool stuff nor ugly vases, I forgot to mention that in the other place there were eight pair of vases on the mantel, truly, for Roger counted them. These rooms were clean and rather bare, with painted floors and washable rugs and fresh curtains and flowers, just one vase in each room and a clear glass vase at that. The beds had iron frames and good springs and mattresses, for I punched them to see. Aren't you proud to think I knew enough to do that? Fran interrupted her story.

Two bedrooms had the furniture painted white and the rest had some old mahogany, she went on.

How many rooms were there? inquired Mrs. Thayne, attracted by Fran's enthusiasm and interested by the pleasant picture she was describing.

On the first floor is the drawing−room, which will be at our disposal, began Frances, evidently quoting Sister. It's pretty and sweet, Mother dear, very simple with a little upright piano and quite a number of books and a fireplace. Just behind is a room where we can have our meals. We can use as many bedrooms as we like; there are five and Sister said if we wished, one could be made into an up−stairs−sitting−room. The bathroom was really up− to−date, and looking *very* clean.

And how much does Sister expect for all this? inquired her mother.

Well, admitted Frances, I asked and she smiled so sweetly and said it depended upon how much service we required and whether we wanted to do our own marketing and perhaps it would be better to discuss the terms after you saw whether you liked the rooms. I told her we were Americans and she said yes, she had thought so. I don't see why, Frances ended reflectively.

Win gave a chuckle. Easy enough to guess, he remarked. I imagine English girls of fourteen don't go around on their own hook, engaging lodgings for the family.

I am almost fifteen, said his sister severely. And I understood that Mother wanted me to look for rooms, so I did, but of course she will make the final arrangements. I thanked Sister and said I'd try to bring my mother in the morning, for I felt sure she would like the rooms. And Sister said she'd be very glad to have young people in the house and that if you wanted references, Mother, you could apply to some clergyman, I forget his name, but I know it's all right. You'll think so, too, the minute you see Sister. I fell in love with her. Oh, her name is Pearce, Estelle Pearce. She gave me her card.

Frances produced it. You will come and see the rooms to−morrow, won't you, Mother? Win can come too, for that tiny train is very comfortable and the walk to the house is short. Rose Villa, Noirmont Terrace. Isn't that a sweet name?

[Illustration: THE VILLAGE OF ST. AUBIN'S]

CHAPTER III. ST. HELIER'S

The moment she entered Rose Villa, Mrs. Thayne heartily agreed with Frances as to its desirability. To Estelle's amazement, she proceeded to engage all the rooms, offering to pay for the privilege of having the whole house for her family.

This was better fortune than Estelle had dreamed of and scarcely two days passed before she realized that a kindly star was favoring her. Frances and Edith became friends on the spot; Nurse, who might have proved a problem, took an instant fancy to delicate Win and started on a course of coddling that luckily amused Win quite as much as it satisfied Nurse. Blunt, downright Roger appealed especially to Estelle, who also found Mrs. Thayne charming.

Aren't we in luck, little sister? she confided to Edith. Even our wildest expectations couldn't have pictured anything more pleasant than this. If they only stop the winter! But where are you going now?

On the sands with the others, said Edith happily. Fran asked me. The boys have gone ahead to the end of the terrace.

Win was singing softly to himself as he stood looking down upon the sandy beach that stretched for miles towards St. Helier's at the left, and on the right, though showing more warm red granite rocks, to Noirmont Point.
Britannia needs no bulwarks, no towers along the steeps, he hummed just above his breath.

There's a tower right in front of you, commented Roger, between the throwing of two stones.

Win cast a glance at the deserted castle of St. Aubin's, a miniature Castle Elizabeth on its isolated rock off shore, another at the martello tower on the point.

I was talking to a man about those little towers, he remarked. One can be rented for a pound a year, and there are thirty−two of them around the island. But they didn't amount to much when it came to actual fighting. The

rocks and tides are what makes Jersey safe. That's what I meant by this place needing no bulwarks.

One of those martello towers would make a fine wireless station, commented Roger. Why did they build them if they aren't any use?

They thought they were going to be, replied Win, looking to see whether the girls were coming. About two centuries ago there was a battle down in the Mediterranean that was decided by the possession of one of those little towers, so England built a good many. But they weren't much use after all.

I never knew that before, said Edith, as she and Frances joined the boys.

England wasn't the only nation that was taken in by them, Win went on. Italy has a number on her southern coast. For a long time people supposed they were called martello towers from the man who built them, but I found in a book that the name came from a vine that grew over this one in Corsica. Before many moons pass I'm going to get into one of them. Smugglers must have used them and there may be things left behind.

Frances cast a glance at the tower in question. At first inspection it looked like a stony mushroom sprouting from the rocks. Some distance above the base opened a rough entrance and a low parapet encircled the top. To scramble over the exposed rocks to the base of this especial tower appeared a hard climb, to say nothing of the difficulties of ascending. The feat looked beyond Win's accomplishment but Frances said nothing. To argue with Win about whether he could or ought to attempt anything was never wise. Left to himself he would stop within the bounds of prudence but resented solicitude from others.

Well, where are we going? she asked.

Let's take the train into St. Helier's, suggested Win. We've scarcely seen the town.

Edith looked doubtful. I ought to ask Sister, she said. Star thought we were just going on the sands.

And so we are, replied Roger. We're taking a train that runs on the sands, he mimicked in a teasing, boyish way. Why don't you call it a beach?

Because it *is* sands, retorted Edith with a pretty flash of spirit that Roger already delighted to arouse. The tram−line is far beyond the shingle.

[Illustration: FOR A LONG TIME PEOPLE SUPPOSED THEY WERE CALLED MARTELLO TOWERS FROM THE MAN WHO BUILT THEM.]

Shingle! gasped Roger, staring in that direction. I don't see any.

The pebbles, cobbles, beyond the sands, explained Edith.

Oh, excuse *me*, chuckled Roger. I thought they were plain stones. Didn't see anything particularly wooden about them.

Edith looked at him. A few days had made her feel very well acquainted with these friendly young people, but Roger was often surprising.

Oh, cut it short, Roger, drawled Win. Run back, will you, and tell Mother that we want to go into town. She won't care and I don't believe Miss Estelle will either, but we ought to mention it. Hustle, because I think that train is coming.

Roger obligingly bolted back, received a nod of possible comprehension from a mother very much absorbed in an important letter, and arrived just as the others boarded the steam tram, a funny affair with a kind of balcony along one side where people who preferred the air could stay instead of going inside. Edith and Frances exchanged smiles of happiness.

I haven't been to St. Helier's often, Edith confided. Just to market once with Nurse, and once to choose curtains with Sister. We thought the drapers' shops quite excellent.

Fran's attention was held for an instant, but after all it seemed only reasonable that draperies should be purchased at a draper's.

Isn't the beach lovely? she confided. It would be fun to walk back.

We might, said Edith. Would Win care if we did? Or could he do it too?

He couldn't walk so far, said Fran, but he won't mind if we want to. Win is angelic about not stopping us from doing things he can't do himself.

Has he always had to be so careful? asked Edith. She and Frances sat at a little distance from the boys. Roger was peering around into the cab of the tiny engine; Win watched the water as it broke on the beach.

Always, said Frances. He was just a tiny baby when they knew something was wrong with his heart. It isn't painful and may never be any worse. Only he must take great care not to get over−tired. Ever so many doctors have seen him and they all say the same thing, that if he is prudent and never does too much, he may outlive us all. Just now in London, he and Mother went to a specialist but all he told Win was that he must cultivate the art of being lazy. Mother says the worst was when he was too little to realize that he mustn't do things. Now, of course, he understands and takes care of himself. It's hard on Win but Mother says it's good for Roger and me. It does make Roger more thoughtful. He says anything he likes to Win and pretends to tease him, but if you notice, you'll see that he does every single thing Win wants and always looks to see if he's all right. It helps me too, for I'm ashamed to fuss over trifles when Win has so much to bear.

The little tram was traveling at a moderate pace toward town, stopping at several tiny stations where more and more people entered.

I can't get used to hearing people talk French, said Frances. It seems so odd when Jersey is a part of England.

The French spoken here isn't that of Paris, remarked her brother, rising from his seat. It's Norman French.

I know I can't understand it easily, confessed Edith, and Sister has always taken pains to teach me. I'm glad it isn't all my fault.

The train came to a stand on the esplanade of St. Helier's. The four stopped to look over the sea−wall, to the beach far below, across to the long stone piers forming the artificial sea basin and up to Fort Regent overhanging the town like a war−cloud.

That fort looks stuck on the cliff like a swallow's nest, commented Roger. Look, there's a snow−white sea−gull!

There's another with a black tail, exclaimed Edith. Oh, aren't they beautiful!

In the United States is a city that put up a monument to the sea−gulls, said Win. Salt Lake City, ever so far inland. A fearful plague of grasshoppers ate everything green and turned the place into a desert. They came the second summer, but something else came too. Over the Rocky Mountains, away from the Pacific Ocean, flew a great flock of gulls and ate the grasshoppers. Their coming seemed so like a miracle that the city erected a beautiful monument to them.

Did they ever come again? asked Edith, greatly impressed.

No, said Win. Just that once.

Without doubt it was a miracle, said Edith so reverently that the three looked at her.

Roger gave a little snort, started to say something, looked again at Edith's rapt face and changed his mind.

Boston ought to put up a monument, too, he remarked at length. Miracles happen every summer in Boston. The city swelters with the mercury out of sight and then along steps the east wind. In ten minutes, everybody puts on coats and stops drinking ice−water. Some tidy miracle−worker, our east wind.

Especially in winter, said Win laughing. I'm afraid a monument to the east wind wouldn't be popular along in January. Shall we come on? Let's go up this street. I've a map, but things look rather crooked, so we'd better keep together.

The quartette started, Roger and Win leading the way. St. Helier's streets are indeed crooked, and paved with cobble stones of alarming size and sonorous qualities. Numerous men and boys tramped along in wooden sabots which made a most unearthly clatter. Even little girls wore them, though otherwise their dress was not unusual. Outside one shop hung many of the clumsy foot− gear, the price explaining their evident popularity.

Signs over shops were as often French as English and sometimes both. At one corner, the party met a man ringing a bell and uttering a proclamation in French. At the next corner he stopped to announce it in English and the interested boys found that he was advertising a public auction. No one else seemed in the least attentive to his remarks.

Fifteen minutes' loitering through narrow, ill−paved streets, crowded with hurrying people and a great number of dogs, brought the four to an open square of irregular shape with a gilded statue at one end. Its curious draperies caught Win's observant eye and he walked around it thoughtfully.

What a very queer costume! he remarked as he completed his circuit. What is it doing on a statue of an English king?

Win spoke aloud, not noticing that the others were beyond hearing, but his inquiry was answered by a gentleman who chanced to be passing.

It is a Roman statue, he volunteered, rescued from a shipwreck. The thrifty Jerseymen considered it too good to be wasted, so they gilded it and placed it here in the Royal Square in honor of George the Second.

Win smiled as he turned to the speaker, a tall, thin Englishman in riding dress. His bearing suggested a military training and a second glance showed an empty coat−sleeve.

This group of buildings may interest you, the speaker added. They contain the Court House, Parliament rooms and a small public library.

Touching his riding−crop to his hat in response to Win's thanks, he turned into a side street where a young man mounted on a handsome horse sat holding the bridle of another. With interest Win watched them ride away. Even from a distance, something about the younger man struck a chord of recollection in Win's usually reliable memory. He was almost certain that somewhere, at some time, they had met. Yet he could not think of any American acquaintance of that age who would be at all likely to be riding about the island of Jersey, his companion not only an Englishman, but obviously an ex−army officer.

Still, the impression of familiarity was strong and Win was yet wondering about it as he slowly climbed the stairs leading to the public library.

Protesting somewhat, the others followed to look at a rather uninviting room, appealing to them far less than to Win, already on the trail for local history. The attendant proved obliging and after supplying Win with several books brought out a shabby brown volume.

We have one of your writers on our shelves, he remarked with a smile, offering the book to Frances.

Poems of Oliver Wendell Holmes, she read aloud. Haven't you any other American authors? she demanded in amazement. And how did you know I was an American?

The librarian shook his head. I have often thought we should have more American books, he replied, but they are so extremely dear as compared with those published on this side of the Atlantic that we have not afforded them. How did I know your nationality? By the way you speak.

Frances looked disgusted. She said little more, but soon persuaded the reluctant Win to postpone his investigations and come down again into the Royal Square.

Now, Sis, what's the matter with you? Win inquired on seeing her flushed face.

Oh, you didn't hear that man say he knew I was an American by the way I talked, sniffed Frances indignantly.

Anybody would think you didn't want to be one, commented Roger bluntly.

I wouldn't be anything else, retorted Frances, only I don't care to have fun poked at the way I talk.

Win's glance traveled from his sister's annoyed face to Edith's, which wore a look of perplexity.

We're polite, he remarked. Here's Edith, who wouldn't be anything but English.

No, said Edith gravely. One always feels that way about one's country. But I understand what Frances means. And I see why people know you are not English. It isn't so much your pronunciation, but you put words in odd places in the sentence and some of your expressions are most unusual, she ended apologetically. I like them. It is interesting to hear things called by new names. Just now Fran said 'poke fun' when she meant 'criticise,' and Roger says a thing is 'fine and dandy' when I should call it 'top−hole.' That is the difference, is it not?

The others laughed and Edith's attempt to bridge a dangerous situation ended successfully. Presently their whereabouts absorbed their attention for Win had left the map behind him on the library table.

For a time they wandered at random, following one narrow street after another, seeing interesting shop windows, but presently discovered that they did not know where they were.

The esplanade must lie at our left, said Win. If we keep turning in that direction we shall surely strike it.

Look at that candy, exclaimed Roger, attaching himself to a confectioner's window. Here's a chance to acquire some choice English. What is black−jack, Edith? Looks like liquorice. Bismarck marble, Gladstone rock, toffy, what's toffy?

It is sweets made of treacle instead of sugar, explained Edith, turning surprised eyes upon him.

Sweets! treacle! exclaimed Roger after a petrified instant. Bring me a fan! Give me air!

Why, said Frances, a sudden light dawning on her. Treacle! I never knew before what Alice in Wonderland meant by her treacle well. It's molasses, Edith. There are some chocolate peppermints!

Without stopping for further speech Frances dashed into the shop. Presently she emerged, carrying a white paper bag, or sack as Edith designated it, and with an odd expression of face.

Joke? inquired Win. What did you ask for? he demanded, accepting a piece of candy.

I got what I wanted, said Fran evasively. It's always possible to walk behind a counter and help yourself if you don't know the names of things.

Later she drew Edith aside. What do you call these? she asked confidentially.

Peppermint chocolate drops, replied Edith. What else could they be?

Turning constantly to the left did not bring them to the sea. Instead they walked a long distance only to find themselves in a poorer part of the town, with increasing crowds of children inclined to follow. Their appearance seemed a source of interest to older people as well and presently Win was induced to inquire his way to the boulevard.

To his surprise the reply came in French, but between his own knowledge and that of Edith, they made out that they were traveling inland instead of toward the shore. This sounded impossible unless they had completely lost all sense of direction.

But a second inquiry brought the same answer, so they followed the offered advice, coming at last to the bay of St. Aubin's more than a mile below St. Helier's, fortunately near one of the tram stopping−places. Edith was good for a walk home and Roger would have gone also if challenged, but both Win and Frances were tired so Edith did not propose to return by the beach. Indeed, the tide was now so high that they would have been forced to go part of the way by the road.

School for us to−morrow, said Frances dismally. But I think we should plan to do something very interesting every holiday all winter.

We will take a tea−basket and lunch out of doors, replied Edith happily. There are beautiful spots to visit in Jersey.

Win looked up suddenly. Fran, he asked, did you notice those gentlemen who rode out of the square while we were looking at the statue? Had you ever seen the younger one before?

Fran shook her head. I noticed only the one who spoke to you, she replied. I was looking at their horses.

All the same, mused Win thoughtfully, I've seen that young fellow before and it must have been in the United States, for I know I should remember encountering him over here.

CHAPTER IV. THE BEACH DOG

You would certainly smile if you could see the school I am going to, Frances wrote to her chum, Marjorie Benton, but when I think of you and the other girls back at the dear old Boston Latin, I feel more like crying.

First I must tell you about Edith Pearce, the girl in the house where we are staying. She has long flaxen hair which hangs over her shoulders in the most childish way, though she's our age. Her eyes are gray with dark lashes and when she looks at you they are like surprised stars. And she has the most beautiful complexion in the world, just pink and white. She is lovely to look at and I feel like a tanned, homely gipsy beside her. She's sweet too, but very easily shocked and I'm afraid she's not only good but pious. She can never take your place so don't worry, only, as I have to be here, I might as well have some fun with her.

I go to school with Edith and it is as unlike the Latin School as the North Pole and Boston Common. There are about thirty boarders, some of them little bits of things Edith calls them 'tinies' who have been sent home from India where their parents couldn't keep them any longer. About fifty day−scholars attend, from kindergarten age up.

I'm the only American and I can tell you I was well stared at. At first the girls couldn't believe it, insisted that I must be Scotch or at least Canadian, so now I wear a little United States flag pin all the time. Gracious, but things are different, especially clothes! Mine are the prettiest in school, if I do say it, and Edith thinks so too. She says my 'frocks' are 'chic.'

Most of the girls, even the big ones almost eighteen, wear their hair hanging and have *such* dresses, frocks, I mean. They fit like meal bags, and being combinations of many colors, look perfectly dreadful. And yet the girls are very nice, some of them from really important families.

To cap the climax, most of them sport ugly black mohair aprons which they call 'alpaca pinnies.' Marjorie, can you imagine what they look like? I told Mother if she wanted me to be English to the extent of wearing a pinafore, I should lie down and die and I'm thankful to say that she simply grinned. But many of the girls have wonderful yellow or red−gold hair and stunning peachy complexions, so they aren't such frights as you'd think.

Instead of going around from one class to another as in any sensible school, the girls stay in one room and teacher after teacher, I mean mistress, comes to them. I get so everlastingly tired sitting still. Never before did I realize what a rest it was to walk from class to class and get a chat on the way. The only exceptions to this rule are preparation, when we sit at desks under the eye of a monitress, and gymnasium work.

Marjorie, when I first beheld that gymnasium teacher, I nearly fainted. Her molasses−colored hair was frizzed hard in front and pinned in a round bun at the back of her head. She had on tight− fitting knee trousers, not bloomers, believe me. Over these she wore a white sweater of a very fancy weave. Over this was a weird tunic of alpaca with two box−plaits in front and three in back. This fell an inch or so below her knees, and every time she bent over or stretched up, those queer tight trousers showed. Her shoes were ordinary ones with heels. The girls wear either their usual frocks or an arrangement like this. I can tell you my pretty brown gym suit was the event of the day when I appeared in it.

Everybody wears slippers at school, puts them on when she first comes and no wonder, because the English shoes are the worst− looking and clumsiest things ever invented by man. Edith's feet look twice as big in her boots as in slippers. You'd think by their appearance that English feet were a different shape from ours, but they are not; it is only the shoes. They make them so thick and stout that they last for years. Edith was plainly shocked when I told her I had a new pair every few months. She thinks mine suitable only for the house. Well, I will admit that English girls can out−walk me.

The other mistresses aren't so queer as the gym teacher but look more like other people except that they wear too much jewelry. Everybody wears a great deal and you know what we think at home of ladies who appear on the street with rings and chains and lockets. Edith and her sister Estelle don't dress so, but Mother says they are quite exceptional.

As for lessons, we have to study. They expect a lot of grammar and parsing, and dates in history and solid facts in geography and all that. Mother approves; she thinks the English system much less faddy than at home. We have Bible instruction in regular lessons. I'll admit that these English girls know more than I do about things in books, but they haven't any idea what's going on in the present world. They didn't know much about the Panama canal and the tolls. Win howled when I said I explained it to them and vowed he'd give a dollar to have heard me. And several didn't know who was president of the United States. Imagine that, when we're the most important republic in the world! I knew their old king.

We begin school at half−past eight and have prayers and a Bible exercise. Different classes follow until eleven when a gong rings and everybody rushes into the garden, a lovely place with box− edged beds and a sun dial and gravel walks. There are myrtles and geraniums, great big bushes of them, and japonicas and heavenly wall−flowers and *trees* of lemon verbena and fuchsias up to the eaves. This is solid truth, and in November, too.

In the garden we find a table with jugs of milk, notice my English, please and biscuit, that is, crackers, and we gobble and faith, we have reason! Studying so hard makes one famished. Then recreation follows for half an hour and we play ball or tennis. Some of the girls are splendid players. School again until two, when we day−scholars leave.

Three afternoons a week, we have to go back for gym work and English composition, which is beastly. On Wednesday there is no school.

Do you want to know what I've learned in one week of school in Jersey?

Well, I can speak three sentences in French. I'll write you in French next time.

I know that Amos and Hosea and Isaiah were all prophets and said that Israel was a very bad place.

I know that Paleolithic man was probably the first inhabitant of Great Britain.

I know how few people like to join mission study classes.

And I know that I love you.

Fran finished her letter, directed and sealed the envelope, affixed a stamp, sniffing slightly at the head of King George instead of George Washington, and ran down−stairs.

Do you know where Edith is? she asked of Nurse.

She is out in front, Miss Frances, replied Nurse. Are you going for a walk?

Just to the beach. We'll be back for tea.

Edith stood at the gate and the two ran down to the shore. The tide, half−way out, left bare a tremendous expanse of wet sand, iridescent under the sun's rays. The water showed wonderful shades of blue, green and turquoise, and in the edge of the retreating waves walked hundreds of gulls, searching for food.

The girls started up the beach toward St. Helier's, chatting happily as they watched the water and the birds. Little sandpipers appeared and some huge gray cormorants.

Presently a handsome collie ran up to them, dropped a stone before Frances and stood looking at her, his head cocked on one side, all but speaking.

You darling, said Frances, picking up the pebble. Does he want to be played with? Well, he shall.

She threw the stone down the beach and the collie shot after it at full speed, his beautiful tawny coat shining in the sunlight.

Twice before, said Edith, when I've been on the sands, he has begged me to throw stones for him to chase. He's a thorough−bred. Such fine markings! He looks like one of the Westmoreland sheep dogs. You've heard of them, haven't you? They are so intelligent about taking care of sheep and they understand everything their masters want. We saw one once that separated and brought to his master three sheep out of a big flock and the man didn't say one word, only motioned to him. He wants you to throw it again.

I can't throw stones for you all night, said Fran at last. You take a turn, Edith.

Edith threw a pebble picked up at random. The collie raced for it and after a sniff, returned without it.

He wants his own stone and no other, laughed Frances. See, he's hunting all about. There, he's found it!

For a good mile down the beach the collie accompanied them, till both were tired of play. Convinced that they would throw his stone no longer, the dog reluctantly left them. Looking back, they saw him accosting a young man, who promptly yielded to the mute coaxing.

I wonder whose dog he is, said Edith. He didn't seem to belong to any one we passed. I fancy he's here on his own.

We really ought to go over to Castle Elizabeth soon, observed Frances. Doesn't it look like a huge monster stranded out there in the harbor?

Sister is afraid of the tides, replied Edith. A soldier was drowned there the other day, trying to cross the causeway after the tide had turned. Look, Fran, I believe that must be his funeral up on the road now. It is a military one at any rate.

Frances looked with interest. First marched a guard of soldiers, two by two, then a band with muffled drums, playing the Dead March. After the band came a gun−carriage drawn by four horses and bearing the coffin, over which was draped the English flag. Several barouches followed with officers in uniform, and then the rest of the regiment, walking very slowly, their guns reversed.

As the procession approached, every man on the route uncovered and did not replace his hat until it had passed, a mark of respect which struck Frances forcibly. They have better manners than we have, she acknowledged half to herself.

Edith looked surprised. Men always uncover on meeting a funeral, she remarked. This was a private, but if he had been an officer, his helmet and sword would be on the flag, and directly behind the gun−carriage, his orderly would lead his riderless horse. A military wedding is so pretty, Frances. I saw one once in Bath Abbey. The officers were all in full uniform and after the ceremony they formed in the aisle, two lines going way down out of the church and at a signal, drew their swords and crossed them with a clash above their heads and the bride and

groom came down this path through the glittering swords. I was just a tiny then, but I decided I'd marry a soldier so I could have the arch of swords.

It must have been very pretty, Frances agreed. Why, what are those? See, like immense horseshoes in the water.

The bathing pools, explained Edith. They show only when the tide is very low. They keep back water for bathing.

And a good job, too, when you have a tide that goes out of sight, commented Frances approvingly, as she looked at the two huge masonry walls near St. Helier's, set in the expanse of wet sand. Look at the boys sailing boats.

Sometimes there are real races with little model yachts, said Edith. There's a club of the young officers and some of the townspeople and they have the prettiest little miniature boats with keels about a metre long, rigged exactly like real racing yachts. It's great sport to see them. But ought we not to go back?

The girls turned for they were already far from home. To their surprise they were presently greeted again by the collie who tore up to hail them rapturously.

Still chewing your stone? Frances inquired. Come along. I suppose we'll have to take you part way back.

The collie flew for the pebble as though for the first time of the afternoon. Before they had gone more than a quarter of a mile, a pretty young lady came up.

I'm afraid my bad Tylo has been bothering you, she said apologetically. He is forever coming on the sands and badgering people into playing with him.

Oh, we liked to play, said Frances, smiling. I think he's a brick. What did you call him?

Tylo, replied the young lady. After the dog in the 'Blue Bird,' you know.

Edith also smiled. Their new acquaintance was looking from one to another, a charming and rather mischievous expression lighting a sweet face.

You're a little sister compatriot, she said to Edith; but I fancy this little lady comes from across the ocean.

Yes, I do, said Frances, but how did you know?

The young lady laughed merrily. Oh, I've knocked about a good bit. And I happen to have known one American boy very well. Indeed, we really grew up together in Italy and England. 'Brick' is rather an American word, isn't it? I've surely heard my friend use it. Americans seldom find their way to Jersey. Are you stopping long?

Perhaps all winter, replied Frances.

There are many delightful excursions to make in the island, said the young lady. Come along, Tylo. We must go home to tea. Oh, she added to the girls, when you go on picnics, don't forget to look for caves.

With another smile and a charming little nod, she left them.

I wonder who she is, said Frances, frankly looking after her. The erect lithe figure was crowned by a finely poised head and a wealth of beautiful fair hair, prettily arranged. Something in her face suggested possibilities of good comradeship, and her dress, while simplicity itself, betrayed a French origin.

She looks nice enough and ladylike enough to be an American, thought Frances approvingly and with a sudden stab of homesickness.

I wish she'd told us her name, she went on aloud, and who the American boy was. Perhaps we might know him.

He can scarcely be a boy now if they grew up together, observed Edith. Wasn't she sweet? I hope we'll see her again.

And what did she mean by caves? Frances continued, pursuing her train of thought. That sounded very interesting and mysterious.

CHAPTER V. MONT ORGUEIL

To find a tutor for the boys proved less easy than Mrs. Thayne anticipated. There seemed a dearth of available young men in Jersey and she had about decided to send Roger to the best school and let Win work as he chose by himself, when Mr. Angus heard of a young Scotchman, already acting as secretary to a gentleman in St. Helier's and who could give the boys his afternoons.

Such an arrangement was not ideal, but Win took an instant liking to the tall raw−boned person, who announced himself in a delightful manner as Weelyum Feesher.

Roger promptly dubbed him Bill Fish and refused to speak of him by any other term, causing his mother to live in terror lest Mr. Fisher should in some way learn of the disrespectful abbreviation. Roger was not at all enthusiastic about Bill Fish but liked still less the two schools he visited. To accept the tutor seemed the lesser of two evils.

The chief drawback proved that the boys were occupied at just the time when the girls were free, with the exception of Wednesday, a holiday for all.

The result was that Edith and Frances were thrown much together. Frances found it fortunate that she had a companion of her own age, for the island ladies soon called upon Mrs. Thayne and drew her into numerous social engagements. The little community had a strong army and navy tinge and naturally welcomed Mrs. Thayne. She would have taken far less part in the various festivities had she been leaving her daughter alone, but the two girls proved so congenial and Mrs. Thayne was so well satisfied with Edith as a companion for Frances that she felt free to indulge her own social instincts and enjoy the pleasant circle so invitingly opened.

Whenever they went out, the girls kept a close watch for the collie lady and the beach dog. Twice Tylo came to hail them on the sands, once apparently entirely alone. The other time he merely greeted them and bounded away to rejoin two riders on the road. One was his lady, her companion a slender young man of distinctly foreign aspect, dark and distinguished−looking. Their horses were walking slowly, the riders engaged in deep conversation and the beach dog's mistress did not see the eager faces of the girls.

They talked a good deal about her, wondering who she was, where she lived and whether they would ever know her. After seeing her on horseback, they fell more and more under the spell of her charm and began to picture her the heroine of all sorts of stories.

Day−dreams and romantic stories however, had but a small place in a world so busily filled with lessons of various kinds. One Tuesday evening, Frances was openly groaning over the need of writing an essay upon Julius Caesar.

Wouldn't you like him better if you saw something he did? inquired Win, hearing her lamentations. There's a castle in Jersey, part of which he built.

Fran's eyes opened incredulously and Roger whistled. Is that one of Bill Fish's yarns? he demanded.

Ante−dates him, replied Win. It's Mont Orgueil, over the other side of the island. Let's have a picnic there to−morrow, take our lunch and stay all day. Mother, you must come. Don't say you've promised to make calls.

I can go perfectly well, said Mrs. Thayne. Only there is Roger's appointment with the dentist in the afternoon. He'll have to keep that, but there will be plenty of time for the picnic if we start early.

Think of having an outdoor picnic in December, exclaimed Frances. We'll take Edith, of course.

Of course, assented her mother. And Estelle, if she will go. I wish she would. She shuts herself up so closely and seems to shrink from seeing people, but perhaps she will go to Orgueil just with us.

Even Edith could not persuade her sister to join the party though Estelle was touched by their regret, evidently genuine.

If you only would, Star, begged Edith. You would enjoy it. You don't know how funny and nice they are to go with.

I couldn't, little sister, said Estelle gently. You go and tell me about it afterwards.

Edith was not satisfied but all persuasion proved useless. She had a vague idea that Star was worried. Just why, Edith did not see, since the plan of letting lodgings had come out so pleasantly. Everything was going smoothly at present; why should Star borrow trouble from the future?

Mont Orgueil is reached by a miniature railway leading from St. Helier's to the fishing village of Gorey. By this time the young people were all well accustomed to the absurd little narrow gauge tramways with their leisurely trains. But if the train into St. Helier's crawled, the one to Gorey snailed, to quote Roger. Time was ample to note the pretty stuccoed houses, pink, cream or brown, with gardens and climbing vines that even in December made them spots of beauty. They passed under the frowning cliffs of Fort Regent and saw several lovely turquoise−blue bays with shining sandy beaches. Farther on farms succeeded the villas, stone farmhouses with tiled or thatched roofs, some with orange or other fruit trees trained against their southern walls. Suddenly Frances rose to her feet.

What on earth are those? she demanded. Just look at those cabbages on top of canes.

The others looked and saw something answering exactly to Fran's graphic description.

Oh, yes said Mrs. Thayne, those are the cow cabbages of Jersey. They are common in the interior of the island. It's a peculiar kind of cabbage growing five or six feet high. The farmers pick the leaves on the stalk and leave just the head on top. These stalks are made into the canes we have seen in shops.

I saw them, said Win, but I didn't realize what they were. Look, there's a Jersey cow among the cabbages.

The Jersey cattle are so pretty, said Frances admiringly.

They are very valuable, said Edith. The farmers coddle them like children.

Gorey proved a picturesque village with many schooners and boats of different kinds drawn up on the beach and in every direction fish nets drying. Above and behind towered the ruined castle of Orgueil, rising more than three hundred feet sheer from the sea.

Mrs. Thayne sent Roger to find and engage a donkey which Win mounted without protest, after one glance at the climb before him, though he insisted on swinging the boxes of luncheon before him on the little animal's neck. Its owner was dismissed, Roger agreeing to pull the beast up the hill.

Mont Orgueil forms the crest of a lofty conical rock and looks down like a grim giant upon the blue waters that stretch away to the coast of France. Tier after tier the fortifications mount the cone, crowned at the apex by a flagstaff.

At the castle entrance, gained after a steady climb, a small boy appeared, sent by the castle keeper to act as guide. He tied the donkey to an iron post and led the way into the interior.

This is the oldest part, he began shyly. They do say this tower was built by Julius Caesar.

Gracious, that's some story! whistled Roger, looking with all his might.

I believe it is true, said Mrs. Thayne. Win, you were reading about the castle before we started.

Yes, said Win. That's straight about Caesar. That's why I wanted Fran to see it. And most of the place was built a thousand years ago. Is it ever used now!

[Illustration: ABOVE AND BEHIND TOWERED THE RUINED CASTLE OF ORGUEIL]

In summer the signal service is quartered here, replied the boy. This is the well, ninety feet deep.

As he spoke, he dropped a pebble over a low parapet. Some seconds later came a hollow splash.

The guide showed them a cell where condemned prisoners were once kept, a ruined chapel with a very old crypt, and above the chapel a room reached by winding stairs. The girls entered with a simultaneous shriek of delight.

What a love of a room! said Edith.

Mother, isn't this too sweet for words? demanded Frances.

This is the Cupola room, explained their guide. Charles the Second stopped here during his exile from England.

Prince Charles! exclaimed Win, his imagination fired at once. Oh, I read that in the guide book, but this his room

Win's voice trailed into silence. To read a fact in a book was different from standing under the very roof that had once sheltered bonnie Prince Charlie. He looked about him, trying to picture to himself those far past days.

The ceiling rose in a huge dome and one immense window framed a wonderful view. From a little sally−port leading to a platform one could look sheer down to the rocks or across fourteen miles of tossing water to beautiful France. By using a little imagination the girls agreed that they could detect the spire of the cathedral of Coutances

easily visible in clear weather.

In the French revolution the governor of Jersey signalled to the army of the Vendee by means of a flagpole held in place by chains, said Mrs. Thayne.

Yes, said their small guide. The chains are still on the wall but the pole is new. The naval men use it in summer.

Do they sleep here? asked Win.

Down in the chapel, sir.

I'd stay here, said Win. Say, how much would you rent this room for?

Three and six a week, sir, with the platform thrown in, replied their small guide so gravely that they all looked to see whether he was really in earnest.

That's cheap enough, considering the view, said Mrs. Thayne, smiling.

Fascinated by the picturesque old castle, Win wandered off by himself, deciphering the inscriptions placed on the many doors. There is no guard in the guard−room, no stores are kept in the storeroom, and the chapel never hears a sermon save those preached by its own stones to those who have ears to hear. But the sunlight falling on the green platforms, the pigeons cooing on the walls, the blue sea stretching to the shining cliffs of France, the glamour of old−world romance struck impressionable Win. Dreamily he recalled that whether Caesar built the tower or not, no reasonable doubt exists that Orgueil was occupied if not built by the mighty Prince Rollo, grandfather of William the Conqueror. Over the main entrance to the castle−keep his coat of arms survives the centuries. For centuries to come, Orgueil will remain gathering more legendary charm as the slow years pass.

Win shook off the feeling of awe gently creeping over him and joined the others, investigating a tiny cell where Prynne the Puritan leader was confined for three years. Roger was immensely impressed by the ruins of a secret staircase, connecting a dungeon where the criminals were executed, with the keep and sally−port.

There's a many secret stairs in the old Jersey houses, volunteered their guide, noticing his interest.

Where can we see them? demanded Roger at once, but this their small informer could not tell.

Gentry lives in those houses, he volunteered. They'se not open to trippers.

To what? demanded Roger.

Visitors, strangers like, explained the boy.

I like that, said Roger, flushing indignantly.

Hush, Roger, interposed his mother. No offense was meant. What are these chains? They seem very old.

They were used long time ago to hang criminals. They do say they put 'em there alive and left 'em to the corbies.

Corbies? Oh, crows, interpreted Win. Nice custom! Mother, look at the heaps of rocks exposed by the tide.

There's more this side, said their guide, turning a corner of the rampart with Roger close at his heels. The rest were about to follow when suddenly Mrs. Thayne gave an exclamation.

Listen! she said. That must be a skylark.

From somewhere in the blue above fell a rain of happy music, so liquid and so sweet that it scarcely seemed to come from any earthly bird.

Where is it? asked Frances excitedly, peering into the air and dropping on her knees the better to look up. Mrs. Thayne did the same and both stared into the sky, trying to detect the tiny spot of feathered joy, the source of all this melody. Presently Edith and Win joined them.

Back around the corner came Roger and the guide, both stopping short at sight of the rest of the party down on their knees on the daisy−starred turf.

Whatever are they doing? ejaculated the boy.

Oh, it's a skylark! exclaimed Frances enthusiastically. Come and see.

Mouth open in amazement, their small guide stood rooted to the spot. A skylark! he muttered, staring at the four in their attitude of devotion. Lookin' at a skylark! he repeated as though unable to credit the testimony of his own eyes.

Win burst out laughing and rose to his feet. Take this, he said, producing a shilling. Thank you for showing us about. We'll stay a while longer and eat lunch here.

The boy pocketed the coin and withdrew, his face still a picture of incredulous astonishment over the actions of this singular and apparently insane group of excursionists. At last sight, he was still slowly shaking his head and murmuring, Lookin' at a skylark!

[Illustration: LOOK, THERE IS A JERSEY COW AMONG THE CABBAGES.]

CHAPTER VI. A RACE WITH THE TIDE

After luncheon, time passed too quickly. Before it seemed possible, Mrs. Thayne declared the hour had come for Roger to keep his appointment with the dentist in St. Helier's.

Let him go alone, Mother, said Win. He's no kid. We want you to stay with us.

Of course he could go alone, agreed Mrs. Thayne, but I ought to consult the dentist myself and do an errand or two. There's no reason why you and the girls should cut short your stay. This is a lovely place to spend the afternoon and the day too perfect to hurry home. Just be back for dinner.

Let Roger return the donkey, suggested Win. I sha'n't need him going down hill and very likely we shall strike across beyond the village.

Mrs. Thayne departed, Roger clattering ahead on the donkey, and the three were left in the meadow by the castle entrance, a meadow starred with most fascinating pink−tipped English daisies.

Just see the dears and then think that it's really winter, sighed Frances. I can't believe that at home everybody

is wearing furs and the ground is frozen. It doesn't seem possible that Christmas is so near.

Win was lying flat on the close−cropped turf, his attitude indicating that he contemplated a nap. After a glance at his prostrate figure, the girls wandered to a little distance, seeking the pinkest daisies. Presently they were surprised by the sudden arrival of a beautiful collie, who poked a cold nose into Edith's face.

O−oh! she exclaimed. Go to Frances. She's the one who likes dogs. I prefer nice soft little pussy−cats.

It's the beach dog, said Frances. Do you suppose his lady is with him?

Edith looked eagerly about. The elevated castle meadow commanded a rather extended view but in no direction was any one visible.

I don't see her anywhere. Come here, Tylo. Oh, Fran, let's read the plate on his collar. Perhaps it will have her name.

Hot and panting from a run, Tylo willingly lay down by the girls and made not the least objection to having his collar examined. The unusually long plate bore considerable lettering.

Laurel Manor, St. Brelade's, read Frances in excitement. Here's some French, Edith.

It's Italian, Fran. 'Palazzo Grassi, Via Ludovisi, Roma.' Just two addresses and no name! Edith ended in disappointment.

Oh, but wait! exclaimed Frances. The light struck the plate at such an angle as to make visible to her some additional lettering, not engraved but apparently scratched with a knife. Though small, the words were extremely neat and legible and the girls deciphered them eagerly.

Connie her dog.

Max his mark.

Her name must be Connie! Edith declared, turning excited eyes upon her companion. Speak, Tylo! Is your mistress called Constance?

Tylo vouchsafed no answer, only pricked his ears, hearing something inaudible to the girls. The next instant came a distinct though faint whistle.

The beach dog departed at once, tearing down over the meadow in a graceful curve to leap a hedge into a shady lane beyond.

Well, we've learned a little, sighed Frances. His mistress is called Connie and she lives at Laurel Manor. The rest ought to be easy. Let's go down to the shore. I want to explore that point of rocks.

But Win's asleep, said Edith hesitatingly. Ought we to leave him?

It's all right, said Frances. He couldn't scramble on the rocks and it's splendid for him to sleep in this fine air. I'll leave a note telling him where to look for us.

Edith supplied a blunt pencil and Fran wrote her message on a bit of paper torn from the luncheon box, pinning it carefully to her brother's coat where he could not fail to see it. Then they ran down to the cove beyond Orgueil.

The water, far on the horizon, showed only as a gleaming line of light, leaving bare heaps and piles of rocks, inextricably turned on end in some prehistoric upheaval. In places the rocks were continuous, in others separated by spaces of wet sand.

Over the rocks grew masses of vari−colored seaweed, brown, yellow, blue−green, even pink. Footing proved both slippery and treacherous, but offered the fascination of exploring an unknown region. As they walked farther out, curious shell−fish were clinging to the stone.

These are ormers and limpets, said Edith. I saw them the day Nurse and I went to market. What a huge winkle!

Fran stared at this new specimen. Is that a winkle? she demanded in disgust. I call it a plain snail. Why, all my life, I've read about winkles and thought I'd like to eat some but I'd die before I'd eat a snail. Oh! Oh! Oh!

Edith turned so quickly that she almost fell on the slippery weed. Frances was fairly dancing with excitement, wholly however of pleasure.

In the hollowed rock lay a pool of clear sea water, at first sight filled with bright−hued flowers, pink, purple, orange. The next glance showed them to be living organisms.

Sea−anemones! breathed Edith softly. I never saw anything so beautiful.

The anemones were pulpy brown bodies varying in size from a pea to a tomato. From their anchorage on the rock they stretched waving tentacles of soft iridescent hues, transforming the little pool into a marine fairyland. Between the anemones a bright yellow lichen−like growth almost covered the warm red granite, and tiny yellow, rose, and black and white striped snails were set like jewels on this background. Two or three sharp limpet shells waved feathery seaweed fans.

A long time passed and the girls still lingered. They discovered that most of the pools boasted anemones, some not unlike an ordinary land daisy with light−colored tentacles stretching ray− shaped from a yellow centre. When touched with an empty shell, the anemone would close over it, folding both the shell and itself into a tight brown ball, then open slowly and drop the shell. The only food the girls had with them was some sweet chocolate, so they experimented with this, watching the lovely living sea− flowers seize upon fragments held within reach of their feelers.

I suppose it will give them frightful pains, remarked Frances at last, rising from her cramped position. Goodness! the tide is coming!

Yes, but it's far out, replied Edith, casting a glance at the line of water, still distant a full half−mile. Look, Frances, here's a tiny pink crab.

For a moment Frances again bent over the aquarium but soon started to her feet.

Let's go back, Edith. We're a long way from shore and you know how very fast the tide comes in.

Oh, is that crab gone? I thought you would mind where he went, said Edith as she reluctantly rose. I wanted to take him to Win.

The two began to retrace their way, at first over piles of red rock covered with seaweed, farther on over stretches of sand surrounding rock islands.

Just as they left the last of the solid rock a big wave came curling lazily along its side. For a second the water clung to it like fingers, then withdrew.

Fran, we must run, said Edith quietly, but her face had grown pale.

Frances made no reply. Both ran as fast as they could across the stretch of level hard sand. Before they reached the first rock island, long fingers of foam again darted past at one side.

Neither girl spoke. Automatically they seized hands and redoubled their efforts. One island after another was left behind, then Edith, looking over her shoulder, saw that the tide was gaining. Its next incoming heave would overtake them.

We'll have to climb these rocks! she gasped.

No! said Fran, giving her hand a tug. Keep on. No matter if we do get wet. We *must* get nearer in. These rocks will be covered.

Edith kept pace. They seemed to have reached a higher ridge of the beach since presently the water, instead of pursuing directly, passed on either side, stretching shorewards.

Too terrified to consider what this would mean when the tongues of water should meet before them, the girls pressed on blindly.

Suddenly there came a shout from shore, now measurably nearer. Down the beach sped a galloping horse, his rider waving to attract their attention.

Fran's quick wits grasped the situation. He'll come for us! she exclaimed. He means us to climb this rock and wait.

This seemed what the rider meant for as they scrambled up the ledge, he ceased to call and merely urged his horse to greater effort. Edith reached the top without accident, but Frances slipped and soaked both feet.

The horse, a beautiful chestnut thoroughbred with tossing mane, came at quick speed. In the distance, his rider looked a mere boy, but as he approached, the girls saw that he was a young man of twenty−three or four, with a fine, clean−cut face, who sat his horse as though a part of it.

Arriving by their rock, the chestnut checked himself in full gallop and turned almost in his stride.

Give me your hand, said the young man to Edith. Step on my foot. Swing round behind me and hold on any way you can.

Edith instantly obeyed. Here, he added to Frances, scramble up in front. Quick! There's no time to lose. Steady on, Saracen! he added as the horse jumped and snorted at touch of the water curling about his heels.

They were perhaps a quarter−mile from shore and the return was made at a fast pace, yet as they came up above tide mark, the waves were lapping the shingle and only a rock here and there remained uncovered.

During the hurried trip the young man had spoken only to his horse, words of encouragement uttered in a pleasant voice, and both girls were still too stunned by the sudden peril and their equally sudden rescue to realize their very unconventional situation; Edith with both arms around the stranger, her cheek pressed into his shoulder; Fran sitting on the saddle−bow, held in position by his left arm while his right hand clasped the reins.

Once in safety, Saracen stopped of his own accord, looking around as though, now the hurry was over, he would like to know what sort of unaccustomed load he had been carrying.

Right we are! said the young man cheerily. Now I wonder if you can slide down.

Still speechless, Frances did so. The young man swung himself from the saddle and turned to lift Edith from her perch as though she was a little child. Again on firm ground, she began to utter incoherent thanks.

[Illustration: HE'LL COME FOR US! HE MEANS US TO CLIMB THIS ROCK AND WAIT"]

I think you must be strangers to the island, he said rather gravely, else you would know that the Jersey tides come in as rapidly as they ebb. This isn't a safe coast to experiment with.

It was the anemones, began Frances. We never saw any before and forgot to watch the water.

The young man smiled. Those anemones! he said. I was once in a similar fix for the same reason. Better remember that the only safe time to watch sea anemones is when the tide is just going out. There's a place up here where the farmer's wife is a friend of mine. I think you'd better let me take you over to Mother Trott and she'll dry you out.

I'm not wet, said Edith. Frances fell, that's why she's drippy.

Oh, but Win! Frances exclaimed. He'll find that note saying we're on the rocks and he'll see the water and be frightened. My brother, she added to the stranger, who was looking at her inquiringly. He's in the meadow.

The young man's clear gray eyes grew rather stern. And what is this brother doing while his little sister gets into danger? he asked.

Oh, it's not his fault. He was asleep and he *mustn't* be frightened, Fran began. She spoke rapidly, her explanation banishing from the inquirer's face all look of disapproval.

I'll go and tell Win, said Edith. I'm not a bit wet. You go on to the farm, Frances. Which house is it?

Do you see the long low one with the vines about half a mile up the hill? replied their rescuer. That's it.

If Win's still asleep, for goodness' sake don't wake him, directed Frances as Edith set off toward the castle. Perhaps I can get dry and be there before he need know what has happened.

Would you be willing to ride in front of me again, Miss Frances? asked the young man, as Edith vanished around the wall. We could reach the farm much more quickly.

Without demur, Frances consented. She felt queerly shaken and ill and to her consternation, as Saracen crossed the highroad and entered the farm lane, a sudden burst of sobs overcame her. She struggled bravely to control herself.

That was a beastly experience, said the pleasant voice, but you were so near shore when Saracen and I saw you, that you'd probably have made it with merely a wetting.

We haven't really thanked you, said Frances incoherently. I do so much Mother

Thank Saracen. He did it. It's nothing at all, and you mustn't let it trouble you. Hello, Tylo. Been off again on your own?

Obedient to touch, his horse stopped at the cottage gate. Frances slid from her perch and the young man dismounted, throwing the reins to the beach dog, whose sudden reappearance did not surprise nor interest Frances, as ordinarily it would have done.

Come round to the back, said her companion, opening the gate. Mother Trott will probably be in her kitchen. She'll put you to rights in no time. No mess too bad for her to take on.

CHAPTER VII. MR. MAX

Frances accompanied her guide along a pebbled path neatly edged with big scallop−shells measuring fully six inches across. Beside the walk stretched garden borders still gay with geraniums, japonicas and other hardy plants in full bloom. As they passed the front door of the cottage with its whitewashed steps gleaming in the afternoon sun, a roughly outlined heart surrounding some initials caught Frances' attention. The design was carved in the stone top of the door−frame and looked very old.

That's a pretty custom of the island, said her companion, noticing Fran's glance. The people who first made a home had their initials cut over the door. Many of the Jersey farmhouses have several sets of initials on the door−stones.

Around the corner of the house lay a neat kitchen garden full of vegetables in thrifty green rows, a patch of the curious cabbages and in a field just over a fence, was tethered a pretty, soft−eyed Jersey cow. Beside the entrance stood a bench glittering with shiny copper pails and milk−cans.

Without stopping to knock, the young man stepped directly into a clean, low−ceiled kitchen, where white sand was scattered on the stone floor.

Are you there, Mrs. Trott? he inquired.

Hastily setting down the pan of potatoes she was peeling, a pleasant−looking stout woman rose to her feet with a curtsy.

If it isn't Mr. Max! she exclaimed, her voice expressing both surprise and delight.

And as usual seeking help, Mrs. Trott. This young lady, Miss Frances, has been unlucky enough to be overtaken by the tides

Poor dear! interrupted Mrs. Trott. Bess! she called, come you down. Ah, 'tis the tides that make the Jersey heartaches. Ye did quite right to bring her, Mr. Max. Bess, be quick!

A rosy−cheeked girl of seventeen came clattering down the tiny stair, to smile at the visitors and drop an awkward, blushing curtsy to each.

Why, Bess, you're quite grown up, said the young man, smiling back at her.

A year does make a differ, sir, said Mrs. Trott. Lead the young leddy up the stair, Bess, and dry her feet and give her your Sunday socks and shoon. Mr. Max, you'll drink tea? Sure, now, and taste my fresh wonders. The young leddy'll be down directly and a cup of tea will set her up.

Indeed, I could do with some tea, Mrs. Trott, and I've not had any wonders since

Frances did not hear the end of the sentence for she was following Bess up the narrow, winding stone stairs to emerge in a little room with slanting caves and dormer windows in its thatched roof. The place was bare but spotlessly clean and through the open western casement shimmered the blue sea.

Sit down, Miss, said Bess in a soft voice with curious musical intonations that made up for imperfect pronunciation.

With a sigh of relief, Frances sank into the straight chair. The reaction from her late adventure was still upon her. Before she knew what was happening, Bess approached with a basin of water and a towel, and knelt to unfasten the soaked shoes.

Oh, I can do that for myself, Frances protested with the independence of an American girl.

Sit ye still, Miss, said Bess pleasantly. 'Tis bad for the nerves to race the tides. It shakes one a good bit.

Her deft fingers made short work of their task. Presently, Frances was comfortable in white cotton stockings and black slippers far too large and wide.

Twill serve, said Bess, smiling at the way they slid around on Fran's slender feet. Dry at least. Now come ye down and drink your tea. 'Tis not lately we've seen Mr. Max. Mother'll be rarely pleased.

Frances had it on her tongue's end to inquire into the identity of her rescuer, but the difficulty of keeping on those heavy leather shoes with their big silver buckles distracted her attention. She came carefully down the stair to find Mr. Max seated on the big black oak settle, his hat and riding−crop beside him and Mrs. Trott arranging her table before the fire.

Come, Miss, to your tea, she exclaimed. Bess, fetch the cream.

Frances tried to protest, feeling already under great obligations to these total strangers, but Mr. Max promptly rose to give her a seat.

Tea will do you good, Miss Frances, he said with a most engaging smile. Try Mrs. Trott's wonders. Have you ever eaten a Jersey wonder?

It looks like a doughnut, said Frances, taking a fried cake from the proffered plate.

A sudden, mischievous grin crossed the young man's face. A plain New England doughnut disguised by an old−world name, he said.

New England! repeated Frances, stopping with the cake halfway to her mouth. How do you know about New England doughnuts?

Mr. Max seated himself, looking boyishly amused.

'Land where our fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,'

he quoted, seriously enough but with gray eyes dancing with fun. Oh, I know the whole thing. Shall we sing it together?

Are you really an American? Frances demanded in utter amazement. Then how what You don't talk But that accounts for it.

She stopped, feeling suddenly shy of questioning him. Well, she added after a second, that's the reason I didn't feel a bit strange about coming with you. It seemed all right just as though you were somebody I knew.

Thank you, Miss Frances, said her companion. That is a very lovely way to express your appreciation. Yes, we are fellow−countrymen, though I have spent much of my life in Europe. In fact, my first visit to the United States was when I was around your age. Since then I've put in four years at Yale and one in Washington. Now, I'm attached to the American Embassy in Paris and came over here to spend the Christmas holidays with old friends. Jersey has seen me many times before this. That's how I happen to know about the sea anemones and the tides.

Mrs. Trott came bustling back with jam, followed by Bess with a covered jar. And how's Miss Connie? she inquired.

She seems very well, replied Mr. Max. Your tea is as good as ever, Mrs. Trott. Clotted cream, Bess? You know my weak spots, don't you?

They do be saying that the Colonel fails since his lady died, went on Mrs. Trott, regarding her table anxiously. Couldn't you fancy an egg now, Mr. Max, or a bit of bacon? as he raised a protesting hand.

Frances also declined. She did not feel hungry but after Mrs. Trott had brought water to dilute the strong tea, she drank it willingly.

Neither did Mr. Max eat enough to satisfy his hostess. After a few moments he rose and looked at his watch.

I think I'll ride over to the Manor and exchange Saracen for another horse and the trap and give myself the pleasure if I may, Miss Frances, of driving you and the others back to St. Aubin's. Your boots will hardly be dry for you to wear on the train. I'd really like to do so, he added, seeing that Frances looked disturbed. You know it is the business of the American Embassy to look after its fellow countrymen in a foreign land, so this is only my plain duty.

Best let him, Miss, said Mrs. Trott approvingly. Mr. Max do always take thought for others. But where happens Miss Connie to− day?

Oh, Miss Connie's gone to a tea−fight of some kind, replied Mr. Max, giving Frances another mischievous glance. She said I couldn't go, so I annexed her dog and her father's horse and went out on my own. I shall be back before long.

Frances gave an anxious thought to Edith, concluded that she probably found Win asleep and was following instructions not to wake him. This conjecture proved correct for Edith soon came hurrying down the path.

I took the first note and left one saying we were at this cottage, she explained. Are you all right, Fran? Do you think you've caught a chill?

Frances explained that they were to be driven home and Mrs. Trott pressed tea and wonders upon Edith, who accepted both gratefully.

Is it far to the Manor to where Mr. Max is going? Frances inquired of Mrs. Trott.

Not for a good horse, Miss, though 'tis beyond St. Aubin's. I'm thinking you must have marked the place, a big old stone house with many a laurel tree about it and open to the cliffs beyond.

Oh, we know it, said Fran eagerly. There are iron gates with a coat of arms and the grounds are lovely.

That's Laurel Manor, Miss, assented Mrs. Trott.

The girls looked at each other in delight. In one afternoon they had learned where lived the mistress of the beach dog and what her name.

'Tis good to lay eyes on Mr. Max again, Mrs. Trott went on. A pity he and Miss Connie couldn't content themselves with each other. 'Tis not to our liking to have our young leddy takin' up with a foreign prince.

Oh, please tell us about it, demanded Frances. We met Miss Connie on the beach and we think she's perfectly lovely. Is she really to marry a prince?

He's not a prince of a royal house, replied Mrs. Trott. He's an Eyetalian and in that country, they tell me, there's a different kind of royalty. I don't rightly know, Miss, but I'm thinking they are Romish princes.

Is Miss Connie marrying a Catholic? inquired Edith in great interest.

That's the question, said Mrs. Trott, reflectively resting both hands on the table. I could see Mr. Max didn't want to talk, but we hear considerable through the housekeeper at the Manor. This young man that they say Miss Connie's tokened to is the son of one of these princes. But his mother was an Englishwoman and a Protestant and so when two boys had been baptized as Catholics, the third son, Miss Connie's young man, was brought up in his mother's faith, our English church.

I suppose, Mrs. Trott went on meditatively, they thought he'd never succeed to his father's title and position, bein' the third son. But the oldest, Prince Santo−Ponte, or some title like that, was killed in a motor mishap they say he was racin' something shameful, and soon the next brother died of pneumonia. So that leaves the Protestant son the heir. And the story is that he's to be made to turn Catholic.

But they can't make him if he won't, protested the shocked Edith. Both she and Frances were listening eagerly to this romantic story. Their wildest flights of imagination concerning Miss Connie fell short of the truth, if this was truth.

I don't know, Miss, I don't know, said Mrs. Trott doubtfully. Turn the young leddy's boots, Bess, don't ye scent the smell o' scorchin'? 'Tis hard on the poor fellow. There's his father urgin' him to do it for the sake of the family, and there's a title and a great fortune waitin' when he does. They'll be tellin' him it's his duty as they tell't the Princess Alix, own granddaughter of Queen Victoria, when she married with the Czar of all the Russias. 'Twas the Greek church she went over to.

But will Miss Connie marry the prince if he does give up his own church? asked Edith eagerly.

Again Mrs. Trott shook her head. There's no mention of any weddin', she admitted, and it may be they're not even tokened, but the prince has been visitin' a sight of times at the Manor. Now, I'm thinkin' it's a good sign Mr. Max is here again. The Colonel, Miss Connie's father, loves him like a son. Why, he and Miss Connie grew up together, brother and sister−wise. The way of it was that Mr. Max's mother died when he was but a tiny and Mrs. Lisle, Miss Connie's mother, about took him for her own. He's fair lived with them. Many's the time he and Miss Connie have run in here for their tea or to dry their feet. You see I was parlor−maid at the Manor before I married Trott. That was when Mr. Eichard was living Miss Connie's brother. He was near fifteen years older and he died

in South Africa, poor lad! Ah, when he was killed it nigh broke the Colonel's heart. Well, I've often helped out at the Manor when extra service was needed. Far rather would I see Miss Connie wedded to Mr. Max.

But how did Miss Connie happen to know the prince? asked Frances.

In Rome. Till her mother died, they spent part of every winter there, but the Colonel can't bear the place now and they stop here the season. I keep hopin' Mr. Max will get her yet. Such a pretty well−mannered boy he always was and never above passin' a friendly word with us all.

I suppose, Mrs. Trott concluded, when you come to think of it, Mr. Max is a foreigner, too, but the best I can say is that he's just like an honest English gentleman.

Frances flushed, choking back a hot comment. She had so quickly felt a bond of kinship with this young American. Yet, in spite of her momentary anger, she realized that Mrs. Trott was paying the highest compliment in her power. Well, pride in her own country could teach Frances to value like loyalty in another.

What is his other name? she inquired.

I couldn't rightly tell you, Miss. He was but a wee lad when he first came to the Manor. He calls the Colonel, uncle, and we forget he isn't really of the family. Yet his father has been here, too. He's famous for something very wise indeed. Could I speak the name, you might know, for he's well−spoken of outside our island.

At this moment, Win appeared, strolling up the lane and looking annoyed to find the girls so far in the opposite direction from the railway. Nor did his vexation lessen on hearing their adventures, softened and smoothed though the version was. In fact, self−controlled Win was inclined to be decidedly cross and to disapprove emphatically acceptances of further favors from a stranger. Fran was still arguing when a smartly−appointed trap drawn by a shiny horse turned into the lane.

Now, you can see for yourself, declared Fran. He's an American and a gentleman and it's all right for us to let him drive us home.

As if we couldn't hire a carriage in Gorey, Win retorted, but with a second glance at the driver, his attention was distracted.

Oh−h! he said in perplexity, that's the fellow who was in the Royal Square that morning. Now, where in the wide world have I seen him before?

Thinking hard, Win stared with puckered brows. Suddenly his face cleared. Why, he's that young chap Father introduced me to the time he took me to Washington, he said accusingly to Fran. Why didn't you tell me?

How on earth could I know? demanded Fran, but her brother had turned with a smile to greet the trap just drawing up by the gate. Mr. Max looked at Win with a puzzled glance which gradually changed to a look of recognition.

I do know you, don't I? he said. Well, I never suspected when I was detailed to entertain Captain Thayne's son for an hour or so, that we'd meet again in Gorey village. Why, that makes us old friends!

Win grasped the cordially offered hand and having bestowed Edith and Frances in the seat behind, climbed up beside Max, his face beaming. With many thanks to Mrs. Trott and promises to come again, they drove off.

Hasn't this been the most exciting afternoon? Frances confided to Edith. We've learned the collie lady's name and met the boy she told us of, and heard about her Italian prince. Look at Win! He's crushed on Mr. Max, I can tell by the way he's looking at him. I should think Miss Connie would much rather marry an American.

Perhaps he hasn't asked her, said Edith sensibly. Perhaps, if she really is engaged to the prince, she did it before Mr. Max came back from America and he couldn't help himself because it was too late.

Max's back did not look as though it belonged to a specially unhappy person and the expression of his face as he talked pleasantly with Win was not that of a young man whose enjoyment in life has been seriously darkened, but it pleased the girls to fancy him as a blighted being, so keenly had Mrs. Trott's rather injudicious confidences appealed to their youthful ideas of romance.

CHAPTER VIII. RICHARD LISLE'S LETTER

Why, I've met Miss Lisle several times, said Mrs. Thayne after hearing Fran's account of the exciting end of the picnic. She's a charming girl and her father is the finest type of an English gentleman. At the lawn party this afternoon she spoke of meeting two girls on the beach and asked if one wasn't my daughter.

Oh, I do hope I can know her, said Frances happily. I think she's the sweetest thing I ever saw. But, Mother, do you suppose what Mrs. Trott said about her and the Italian prince is true?

That was a bit of gossip which Mrs. Trott should not have repeated to girls of your age, commented her mother, but since you have heard it, I suppose it will do no harm to say that Prince Santo−Ponte undoubtedly does visit at the Manor, though I do not believe that any engagement exists between him and Miss Lisle. As for Mr. Max, as you call him, his father is Professor Rodney Hamilton, the noted scientist. Max has been much with the Lisles and to all purposes is the son of the house.

The day when I really meet Miss Connie will be the happiest of my life, declared Frances solemnly. Later, her amused mother learned that Edith was equally smitten.

In his quiet way, Win was most anxious to see more of Max and it was partly with this wish in mind that he set off one morning shortly after the picnic at Orgueil, to stroll on the road leading past the Manor. On so pleasant a day he might encounter the young people riding or walking.

When Win reached the Manor gates, no one was in sight, and he sauntered past, not caring to intrude on private grounds. One longing glance he cast at the chimneys above the laurels, twelve that he could count from that angle. What a rambling old structure the Manor house must be! Surely in its existence stretching back through the centuries, many interesting things had happened under that roof. What fun it would be to try to find them out!

Absorbed in pleasant thought, Win walked farther than he realized, lured by the blue sea and a most interesting little church almost on the water's edge. The doors proved locked, but Win resolved to come again when he could gain admittance, for from outward appearance the building was extremely old.

On turning, Win was soon aware that he had overtaxed his strength and was in no shape to walk to St. Aubin's. Pleasant as the sky still was, a strong sea breeze had risen, bringing difficulties for a person who required very favorable conditions for any prolonged exercise. Only slow progress was possible and when he again reached the iron gates of the Manor, he was really too tired to go on. Choosing the sunny slope of the hedge, he sat down to rest.

Before long, voices approached on the other side of the laurels, voices speaking in French, and Max came through

the arch, accompanied by a gardener carrying tools.

Why, Win, he said. You're not stopping at the gate, I hope. The house is just beyond.

[Illustration: A MOST INTERESTING LITTLE CHURCH ALMOST ON THE WATER'S EDGE.]

Win smiled. I sat down to get my breath, he explained. I've been for a stroll and the wind knocked me about a trifle.

Max looked at him keenly. It's a bit cool to stop there, he said. Come up to the house. We'll slip into the library and you can rest properly.

Win demurred, thinking he would detain Max from his business.

Uncle only asked me to direct Pierre about some planting around the cottages, Max replied. He added some words in French to his companion, who nodded and struck off toward the shore. I'll not stop for you, Max went on, taking Win's arm. There isn't a person at home, and you will have the library to yourself.

Win yielded at once. Aside from the pleasure of seeing Max again, the suggestion of books acted as a magnet.

They crossed the beautiful Manor lawn, green as in June, not toward the main entrance but in the direction of some big French windows opening on the terrace. The casement yielded to Max's touch and the two entered a room that would have made Win gasp with pleasure had he been less exhausted. He received only the impression of spacious beauty and countless books, as he was established on a big old settle beside a fireplace where cheery flames were flashing. Before he knew precisely what was happening, Win found himself tucked among comfortable cushions.

There, go to sleep now, said Max, flinging over him a soft blue Italian blanket. I've an idea this thing belongs in Connie's room, but since she left it here we will make use of it. There's no one at home and the only person likely to come is Yvonne, one of the maids. If she appears to look after the fire, just tell her you are my friend.

Max departed and Win soon fell into a reverie. He did not sleep immediately but as his physical discomfort lessened under the influence of rest and quiet, he began to look about him.

The three rooms composing the library were very high and opened into one another by arches. From floor to ceiling the books climbed, rank on rank, on the upper shelves in double tiers, in some places overflowing window seats. Narrow stained−glass casements threw pleasant patches of color on the polished floor. Age had blackened the oak ceiling and the handsome wall paneling where books did not conceal it. Here and there hung portraits, evidently of the family, judging from certain recurring resemblances. Their quaint costumes dated from the days of the Stuart kings.

The utter quiet of the place, the time−faded bindings, the old pictures, the spots of crimson and blue light, the faint odor of leather, mingled with the scent of fresh flowers from some invisible source, all had their effect upon Win, who sank into a state of mind where he was neither awake nor quite asleep. His last wholly conscious thought was for the curious coat of arms above the fireplace, a shield that bore the date 1523.

An hour later, Win came to full consciousness and at the same time to a sense of familiarity with his surroundings. Of all queer things! he thought as he sat up and looked around him. The first day I was in Jersey I dreamed of this room or of some room like it. That man up there in the picture is mighty like the old Johnny that was around. I've been dreaming about him now, only I can't remember what.

Try as he might, Win could not recall that dream, a fantastic jumble of persons and an impression, almost painful, of a fruitless search.

This is a house where anything might have happened, his thoughts ran. How I wish I could have a chance at these books!

Shelves framed even the ancient fireplace, their contents within easy reach of Win's settle. His eye ran idly along the titles, a History of the World, an edition of Defoe, some old hour−books. Tucked in with these were two volumes of very modern philosophy, their bright cloth bindings looking curiously out of place. With their exception, nothing in sight looked less than a century old and examination proved most to be even older. Many bore marks of ownership by Lisles dead and gone.

His enthusiasm thoroughly aroused, Win examined volume after volume, lingering over the quaint bookplates. Finally he took down a book unlettered on the back, but with a rubbed leather binding that showed marks of use. It proved a very old copy of the Psalms, a book that some one had once read often, for its pages were worn not only by time but by constant turning.

Opening to the front, Win searched for a bookplate. There was none, but in fine handwriting appeared: Richard Lisle His Valued Book. As Win replaced the volume a paper slipped from its pages.

Picking it up, he glanced idly at the single sheet which seemed a page perhaps lost from some letter written long before, possibly a leaf from a diary. The penmanship was like the autograph in the Psalter, the ink, though faded, perfectly legible on the yellowed paper.

The extract began in the middle of a sentence. Win, who started to decipher it from mere curiosity, ended by reading it five or six times. It ran as follows:

having fed my Prince and Eased him after his hard Flight we took Counsel anent his Refuge.

That he should lye at ye Manor looked not wise. Ye Castel seemed ye better Place.

Lest he be curiously viewed of Many we did furnishe Other garb and a Strong Bigge Cloake. And those who knew did safely lead him through ye Towne.

Ye honoured Relicks my Sonne and I did place in ye Spanish Chest and convey by Lantern light to that safe Place beyond ye Walls. So shall they Reste till happier Times shall Dawne.

Strange that this Day should bring such Honour to Mine House.

Win's eyes grew interested and excited as he studied this message from the past. For whom was it meant and why had it lain all these years in the old Psalter? Did the Manor family know of its existence? The prince, the castle, the town, mentioned by a Lisle of Laurel Manor, must refer to events of island history.

After thinking a few minutes, Win drew out his notebook and made a careful copy. Surely that was not abusing Max's hospitality and could do no harm. If he discovered anything interesting in looking up the matter in some history of Jersey at the public library, he would share his knowledge. Or there surely must be books of that kind here at the Manor. Perhaps he would be permitted to come again and investigate this fascinating room more thoroughly. He wished he knew Max better. If he only did, he could show his find at once and ask for an opinion. Well, that might come later. Anyway, it would be great fun to study the enigmatic paper and see what he could make of it.

When Max came quietly a few minutes later, Win made no mention of his discovery. Surprised to find it so late, he thanked his host, and declared himself entirely fit to walk back to Rose Villa.

Come again, said Max as they parted at the gates. I know you liked the library and that will please Uncle Dick. You must come when he's at home and he'll show you all his special treasures.

Win went on with a happy face. That meant he would certainly have another opportunity to browse in that fascinating old book−room, and perhaps become so well acquainted with the Manor family that he could share his puzzle with somebody who would be equally interested in finding out what it meant.

CHAPTER IX. CHRISTMAS IN JERSEY

Fran's happiest day soon dawned, for not long after the Orgueil picnic, she and Edith were walking down one of Jersey's lovely lanes. Enclosed by high ivy−covered earthen banks, it ran, a straight white road between green walls, and so narrow that at regular intervals, little bays were provided that carriages might pass. Evergreen oaks, often growing from the banks themselves, and drooping vines made the lane a bower of beauty even on a December afternoon. The girls had stopped to admire the old Norman gateway leading to Vinchelez Manor, when suddenly around a corner, bounced the beach dog. Close behind came Constance Lisle and Maxfield Hamilton.

[Illustration: THE OLD NORMAN GATEWAY LEADING TO VINCHELEZ MANOR]

We've been to call on your respective mother and sister, declared Connie, and were desolated not to find the little ladies. What luck to meet you! Max, you don't need an introduction, do you, after playing Lord Lochinvar with both girlsat once?

At this sweeping characterization, they all laughed and walked along together, Tylo galloping ahead or falling behind as his sweet will led.

I'm giving a treat to the Sunday−school children after Christmas, Connie confided, as at the end of a brisk walk, they came to the parting of the ways. I should like you girls, if you will, to help me with the kiddies. The brothers are invited too, if they would fancy it.

Win would like to help, Frances said quickly, her face lighted with pleasure at this request. He's very good at things like that, but Roger's only twelve, you know.

Oh, Roger can hand buns, said Connie at once. No harm if he does tread on a few. I shall count on you then next week Thursday, three days after Christmas. Take care not to stir abroad on Christmas eve for that's when the Jersey witches hold their meeting at the rock up by St. Clement's.

She waved a laughing adieu and the girls went back to Rose Villa, bubbling over with pleasure and anticipation.

It was fortunate for Frances that she did have this expectation of a visit to the Manor to buoy her spirits, for the season scarcely seemed Christmas. Warm weather and plentiful flowers did not appeal to one accustomed to the holiday in wintry Boston, but not the weather alone disturbed Fran. For some foolish reason she disliked intensely the differences of celebration that marked this holiday in another land. Her state of mind both worried and distressed Mrs. Thayne.

Why, little daughter, don't you see the fun of having Christmas under strange conditions? she asked one evening, when she went to investigate a sound of woe from Fran's room.

No, I don't see any fun in it, replied Frances stubbornly. I could stand Thanksgiving, even though I had to go to school, because Miss Estelle knew it was an important day to us and had a turkey for dinner and put little American flags around. But Christmas here in St. Aubin's, without Father, is too impossible.

Mrs. Thayne was silent for a moment. Then she sat down on the bed and took Frances in her arms.

Listen, now, she said. I want you to think about somebody else for a moment. There's Edith. Just remember how sad this season must be for her and Estelle. Yet Estelle goes about with a smiling face that gives me a heartache because her eyes are so pitiful. She's planning hard to make things pleasant for us and to have it seem Christmas to Edith. I know some of her plans, Fran. Then, even if Father isn't with us, we know he is well and that it is only a question of time before the *Philadelphia* is where we can be nearer. Win is always self−controlled and naturally he and Roger don't miss the home conditions as you do, but their enjoyment is going to depend largely upon their sister. Why, Fran, you usually like new experiences and here they are looming thick and fast.

That's just the trouble, sobbed Fran. I don't want them all piled on top of Christmas. I want to be with Grandmother and the cousins. I can't believe it is Christmas when it's so green and so hot.

Many nice things are going to happen, her mother went on. Just think what fun you and Edith will have helping Miss Connie with her school treat. You are going to find that very English.

Frances smiled. Oh, I won't be a pig, Mother, she said at last. Miss Connie is a dear and of course we must make the boys have a nice time.

The climate agrees so well with Win that I am very thankful to spend Christmas here, replied Mrs. Thayne. To−morrow, Nurse is going into town to the French market and I think you will like to go with her.

Win and Edith joined the marketing expedition next morning and even Frances was impressed with the holiday spirit overhanging the place. They left Nurse carefully inspecting fat geese in a poulterer's stall and started to explore.

Any number of plump chickens and ducks hung about, together with little pigs decorated by blue rosettes on their ears, a touch that struck Win as extremely funny. In the vegetable market were heaped huge piles of potatoes, scrubbed till their pink skins shone, great ropes of red onions braided together by their dried tops, turnips, artichokes, garlic, winter squashes, white and purple cabbages, celery and egg plant and many varieties of greens and early vegetables. The stalls themselves were prettily arranged and fragrant with nice smells but their keepers were the great attraction. Many were in charge of old women dressed in white peasant caps and clean starched aprons above full wool skirts and wooden sabots. Little tow−headed grandchildren, comical replicas in miniature, smiled shyly or dropped bobbing curtsys as the girls stopped to speak.

Fruit stalls proved even more fascinating with the hothouse grapes, red, white, and dark purple, showing a hazy bloom. Fresh figs and dates abounded, alternating with baskets of Italian chestnuts and oranges, forty for a shilling. Every stall seemed to have vied in decorations with its neighbor, being bowers of myrtle and laurestinus. One sported a shield showing three leopards in daffodils against a green background.

Look at the English coat of arms, said Frances, catching sight of it.

That's not English, said Edith. Those are the leopards of Jersey, the old Norman insignia.

I can't understand, observed Frances as they sauntered on, why, when Jersey belongs to England, it has a different coat of arms and government and everything.

Because the islands are all little self−governing communities, supplied Win. It's a privilege they have always had, and even England wouldn't dare take it from them now. Jersey is desperately jealous of Guernsey. They say that even a Jersey toad will die if it is taken to Guernsey.

Neither will Guernsey flowers blossom here, Edith added. Oh, there's Miss Connie!

The little lady of Laurel Manor was standing before one of the flower−stalls, chatting in French with a very clean, rosy−cheeked old woman in a white cap. Behind Constance stood a servant carrying a basket and as the girls watched she purchased an enormous bunch of daffodils, a sheaf of calla lilies, and a quantity of narcissus.

Isn't she sweet in that soft green suit, commented Edith admiringly.

Turning from the stall, Connie saw and hailed them. Have you seen the fish−market? she asked after greeting them gayly. Oh, you must not miss that. I always go there.

She led them past a long bench where sat several nice white−capped old women beside huge baskets of spotlessly washed eggs or round rolls of fresh, unsalted butter wrapped in cool green cabbage leaves. Some of them nodded and smiled and once Connie stopped to ask after a sick child. Everybody spoke in French and seemed most kind and cordial.

Arrived at the fish−market, conger eels as big as Win's wrist, and four or five feet long, crabs two feet across the shells, lobsters blue rather than green, enormous scallops, huge stacks of oysters, cockles and snails, the so−called winkles, greeted the astonished eyes of the young people. In other directions were heaped piles of smelts, plaice and unknown fish.

These are what I dote on, said Constance, calling their attention to piles of tiny crabs, neatly tied by the claws into bunches. Most were alive, but owing to the fact that all chose to walk in different directions, the bunches remained fairly stationary. One might purchase two, four, six or a dozen, according to the size of one's appetite.

I'm so glad we met, said Connie, when in addition they had made the round of the flower market and exclaimed over its treasures of color and fragrance. I thought of you this morning and wondered if you young people wouldn't like to help decorate the church. There are never too many helpers and we have ordered such lovely greens and flowers. Several of us are to be at the church at two this afternoon and you'll be very welcome if you care to come. It's pretty work and we always have a nice time.

Indeed, we should like to help, said Frances promptly. Is it Mr. Angus's church at St. Aubin's?

No, the one I mean is a tiny stone church not far beyond the Manor. Just take the highroad inland from the village and turn once to the left,

Oh, I know, said Win quickly. It stands almost on the shore.

That's it, said Connie. I'll expect you then.

Win declared himself quite equal to helping with the decorations that afternoon. When they arrived, the beach dog lay in the porch, thumping his tail by way of welcome, so they knew his mistress was already within. For a few moments, the three lingered to look at the quaint French inscriptions on the churchyard stones, but finally entered rather shyly. They were not given one moment to feel themselves strangers.

I'm delighted to see you, exclaimed Constance, coming down the aisle with a long vine trailing after. So glad you came. Rose, she called to a pretty young girl working near by, here are some helpers for your windows.

Oh, you know Rose LeCroix, don't you? She goes to your school. Win, she added quickly, won't you come and help struggle with this tiresome pulpit?

Win followed at once, glad to see Max already busy over the designated task, but Constance sent him to seek a certain wire frame reputed to exist in the sacristy. Win found himself twining myrtle wreaths around the pillars of the stone pulpit, yet stealing constant glances at the interior of the old church.

Part of it was very ancient, with round Norman pillars and a rounded vault, speaking of very distant days. Everything save pews and choir stalls was of granite, its rosy color making the stone seem warm rather than cold. Vines, holly and flowers heaped about the interior emphasized by their ephemeral beauty the solemn enduring majesty of the church itself. Ten or twelve young people were working more or less steadily to the accompaniment of much gay conversation.

Oh, Max, that's the wrong frame, Constance said suddenly.

Win turned to see her sorting lilies where she knelt on the chancel steps.

This isn't Easter, ducky, she added. We want a star, not a cross.

Max smiled at Win, an indulgent, rather amused smile, and when the proper frame had been substituted, came back to the pulpit.

Tell me, said Win, indicating the stone vault. What are those little pointed things up there?

You mean the limpet shells? asked Max, looking up.

Are they shells? said Win in amazement. They looked it, but I couldn't imagine how shells could be scattered about up there.

Some thousand years ago when the original builders quarried this stone from the Jersey shore, they didn't trouble to scrape off the limpets that clung to it. Nobody has removed them since; now it would seem sacrilege to do so.

A thousand years! repeated Win in awe. He stopped work for a moment to look at the pointed shells on the roof.

Does jar a fellow and makes him feel mighty transitory and insignificant, doesn't it? commented Max, with a friendly glance of understanding. I think there's no place quite like this church. The Manor lies in its parish and Uncle Dick would know if a single limpet was knocked off. The only time I ever saw him really angry was once when some Americans I'm an American, too, you know, so I can tell this story tried to bribe the verger to scrape one down for them. There was rather a row and Uncle was in a fine fizz.

There's one interesting thing common to all these old churches, Max went on, seeing that Win appreciated the place. The island is divided into twelve parishes. From the church of each there was originally a road, leading directly to the sea. In feudal times, a criminal was safe if he took sanctuary in the church and by the old custom, after he had abjured his crime, he could go down by this one road to the shore and leave the island. But if he strayed never so little aside, he lost the benefit of the sanctuary and was liable to the law. Just imagine some old robber or cut−throat marching down his path to the sea, escorted by the churchwardens, with other men watching his every step, ready to seize him if he swerved. Some of these sanctuary roads are still the main highways.

I think the island history is so interesting, said Win. I suppose it is a fact that Prince Charles did take refuge here?

No doubt of it, Max replied, looking critically at the almost completed pulpit decorations. Indeed, there is a story that he was entertained at Laurel Manor. Ask Uncle about it, he added, not noticing Win's start of interest. He's awfully keen on that legend. I suppose it is very likely true though I don't know that there is any real proof. There, do you think her ladyship will approve our efforts? Excuse me, Connie wants her star put in place.

Left alone, Win stood thinking hard. So Prince Charles was reputed to have visited Laurel Manor! What if that chance letter were the proof? If so, was there not more in its message than confirmation of the prince's stay? One thing was certain he *must* get acquainted with Colonel Lisle.

So many industrious hands soon completed their task. After the gay workers departed, Connie lingered for a last look.

Come and see it to−morrow morning, she said to the three. Probably you'll wish to go into town at eleven, but come here for the early service at six.

Edith looked doubtful. Sister planned to go to St. Aubin's, she said.

I couldn't come alone, said Frances, her disappointment showing in her face.

I'll come with you, offered Win so unexpectedly that his sister frankly stared.

Good! said Constance. There'll be no music and only candle−light, but you'll love it. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

That very evening Fran was forced to admit that a Jersey Christmas had its compensations. The doors of the back parlor, mysteriously locked for days, were opened and in the room, gay with holly, mistletoe, and laurestinus, appeared a most delightful little Christmas tree, itself rather foreign in appearance since it was a laurel growing in a big pot. Real English holly concealed the base and merry tapers twinkled a welcome.

Estelle had spent much time and thought, coupled with anxious fears lest these young Americans whose lives seemed so sunny, might not care for so simple a pleasure. Their appreciation, not in the least put on for the occasion, quite repaid her. Inexpensive little gifts adorned the tree, each bearing a number.

Draw a slip, commanded Roger, appearing before his mother with a box. Take a chance and see what you'll get.

When all the slips were distributed, Roger as instructed by Estelle, took a gift at random from the tree and called its attached number.

Who has eight? he demanded.

Here, said Win, giving up his slip in exchange for the tiny package, and presently laughing heartily over an absurd mechanical mouse. Ridiculous misfits in the presents made the distribution all the funnier, and the rejoicing was great when Roger, who didn't believe in washing his hands without being told to do so, drew a wee cake of soap. He took it good−naturedly and considered as an added joke, Estelle's hasty and shocked assurance that it was not meant especially for him.

Strange to say, some packages appeared on that tree of which Estelle was ignorant, conveyed by Roger to the proper persons. Edith was rendered speechless with joy over several lovely gifts, and tears filled Estelle's eyes. Nor were Nurse and Annette forgotten. The Thaynes had certainly lived up to the American reputation for generosity.

Then Nurse brought a big bowl filled with darting blue flames. The courageous shut one or both eyes, stuck in a fearful finger and extracted a fig or a fat raisin. Egg−nog and roasted Italian chestnuts completed Estelle's entertainment save for the holiday dinner of roast beef and plum pudding to follow on the morrow.

Unexpected by Estelle, her plans were supplemented by a group of parish school−children, led by the old organist, who came through the streets, singing Christmas carols: God save you, merry gentlemen, Good King Wenceslaus and As Joseph was a−waukin'

In fascination Fran lingered on the steps long after the singers were gone, pleased with her distribution of pennies from her mother's purse and biscuit provided by Estelle. Far in the distance she could hear their voices. Yes, after all, an English Christmas had its points.

Next morning, Nurse's call seemed incredibly early to Frances, though she found the whole household awake and exchanging greetings. Mrs. Thayne decided to accompany Win and Fran, and Roger alone remained in bed.

The stars still shone brightly, making it seem the middle of the night, save for the hurrying groups bound for church, some still singing carols or hymns.

It's like October weather at home, isn't it, Mother? said Frances as they walked on through the crisp, clear air. See, there are lights in the windows and people leaving lanterns in the porch.

The moment she entered, Frances understood what Connie meant by not missing that service for anything in the world, and Win felt it even more keenly, being by nature more impressionable.

The utter quiet, broken only by a distant wash of waves, waves that sometimes broke over the stones in the churchyard, the candles in the chancel, throwing into high relief Constance's Christmas star and touching with light the jonquils banking steps and altar rail; the dusk in the nave of the church half−revealing scattered groups of people as they knelt in silence under the arched vault where clung the limpets dead a thousand years, all contributed to the age−old Christmas miracle.

I feel as though I'd never realized what Christmas meant before, thought Win, and somewhat the same feeling came to Frances as her eyes became accustomed to the gloom and she discerned among the kneeling figures her fellow−workers of the day before. Half−way down the nave was the family from the Manor, Constance and Max on either side of a tall gray−haired gentleman. Fran recognized him as the one who had spoken to Win that day in the Royal Square.

Win recognized him also, knew him to be Colonel Lisle and was quickly reminded of that curious old document, as yet a mystery. How he hoped Miss Connie's school treat would afford an opportunity to meet the owner of the Manor and to take some step toward the solution of that puzzle.

As the service began, Frances stole a glance at the windows banked with glossy laurel and holly, over which she and Edith had worked with Rose LeCroix and her sister Muriel. Just because she had helped do something for that little church in a foreign land, Fran experienced a sudden blessed feeling of belonging a bit. A pleasant glow crept into her heart, a sense of the spirit that makes the world akin at Christmas.

CHAPTER X. THE BUN WORRY

I have helped you very nicely all the morning, Connie, and I hope you appreciate my goodness. But as for messing about the lawn with a bun worry in full blast, thank you, Maxfield is not on. One doesn't want to let one's self in for everything.

Your goodness isn't such as to alarm me, sighed Constance, casting a worried glance about the Manor green. You're in no danger of acquiring saintship. Dad has balked, too. What'll I do alone?

Being on toast yourself, why do you want to have me there? said Max mischievously. Aren't all the Sunday school mistresses coming to help and didn't you ask those nice American kiddies?

I did, and that's another reason why I want you, retorted Connie, flying to adjust to her better satisfaction the basket of narcissus decorating the chief table. Max, I don't know where to have you. Since you came from the States, I can't make out whether you are English or American. Here you are shying either at an English school treat or at some nice American children. Which is it?

Neither, I think, Max replied after a survey of the close− clipped lawn, boasting that velvety turf which only centuries of care can perfect. Great groups of laurel proudly proclaimed the right of the Manor to its name; carefully trimmed hedges of yew and box protected borders already gay with spring flowers, and beyond the grounds shimmered the sea. Max's glance was one of affection, for this was the scene of many happy boyhood days.

I think I'd shy just as quickly at an American tea−fight, he said at length. As for being neither English nor American, I love both countries. I would certainly be loyal to my own, but I would also take up arms for England, if the time ever came that she needed me and the two duties didn't conflict.

You're a duck, said Constance promptly. Come, take up arms and carry a basket of buns for me this afternoon.

Too many petticoats coming, said Max. I'm afraid of those freaks from the rectory. But I'll agree to furnish a substitute who will more than take my place. The kiddies will be thrilled to a peanut. Come now, let me off?

I suppose so, agreed Constance. Don't bother about letting me down softly. Trot off and do anything you think you have to do. Here are the Marque children already. And there come the Thaynes.

I will perform a vanishing act, said Max quickly. Connie, I really am booked for an hour with Uncle Dick, but I'll send that substitute. Watch for him.

Constance looked after him suspiciously, but Max was already half across the sunken garden, whistling to Tylo as he went.

Are we too early, Miss Connie? asked Frances as they came up.

Just on the dot, replied Connie, greeting them all. The children are arriving. We will play games first and then have tea. Excuse me, please, while I go and speak to the Reverend Fred.

Constance departed to greet the curate thus disrespectfully designated, a youthful individual of rather prepossessing appearance. Just behind him appeared Rose and Muriel LeCroix and other girls whom Frances knew at school.

Soon the children came thick and fast, shy youngsters propelled by older brothers and sisters, independent groups, a few babies in arms, a scattering of older people.

Two white−draped tables by the yew hedge were the target for the children's eyes as they wondered what those linen−covered baskets concealed. There would be tea of course, buns in plenty, possibly cake.

Presently the children, poked and pulled into line were started playing London Bridge, two of the biggest girls forming the bridge.

For a moment Frances stood apart, watching the marching, shouting youngsters, scrubbed till they shone, clothed in clean though often clumsy garments and heavy shoes. No great poverty was indicated by their apparel, and some, evidently of French origin, were dressed with real taste and daintiness. These were also remarkable for a more vivacious appearance than the stolid little Anglo−Saxons. Some few were of striking beauty.

As one game succeeded another, the children grew less stiff and self−conscious. The Reverend Fred was joining in the sport with conscientious zeal, as were his two sisters and Edith and Miss Connie. Fran caught the contagion and found herself flying about the Manor lawn, tying a handkerchief over one child's eyes to lead in Blindman's Buff, helping another group play King of the Castle, finally organizing a game of Drop the Handkerchief.

With amused surprise she saw Roger actually helping Muriel LeCroix with a number of the smallest children, and this fact so impressed Frances that she failed to note Win's absence.

Her brother was not far away. Had Frances been nearer the opening in the hedge, leading into the sunken garden in its season full of roses, she might have seen an interesting picture, for with great glee, Win was helping prepare for appearance Max's promised substitute.

Down in the rose−garden, where an old sundial marked only the sunny hours, the afternoon shadows grew long. The older people, somewhat exhausted by strenuous play, seated the children in a big circle ready for tea. From the Manor emerged Yvonne, Pierre, and Paget, Constance's old nurse, armed with shiny copper cans, to fill cups for distribution.

Frances seized a basket of buns and for a time was so occupied with playing Lady Bountiful to a host of little hands, now rather grimy, that it seemed quite natural to be sharing in this unusual festivity. But as she was hurrying back to the table to refill her empty basket, she met Edith on a similar errand. Suddenly it struck her as very odd that she should be helping.

This is the funniest affair I ever saw, she confided merrily.

Why? asked the puzzled Edith, lifting grave eyes to look at her. Don't you give the Sunday school children treats in America?

Oh, yes, admitted Frances, but we'd never fill them up on weak tea and buns. They'd expect ice−cream and cake.

Edith looked much shocked. Ices are very dear, she remarked, and not fitting for these children. Would you really serve ices in winter? she asked incredulously.

On the very coldest day of the year, asserted Frances emphatically. Oh, America is so *different*, Edith! Why there's scarcely a town so tiny that you can't buy ice−cream any time of the day or any time of year.

It must indeed be different, Edith agreed. Basket refilled, she returned to her charges.

For a minute Frances lingered, looking around at the circle of hilarious children, each with a mug, more or less precariously clasped, each stuffing big plummy buns; looked at the older people so anxiously attending to them. Yes, it was very different, very English, but also very interesting.

As Frances passed the entrance to the sunken garden, her basket filled this time by solid−looking pieces of cake, she heard her name.

Fran, came Win's voice, call Tylo. Get him to come out on the lawn.

Frances called. She could see no one in the garden, only hear amused voices trying to induce Tylo to answer the summons.

He won't start, said Win again. Ask Miss Connie to whistle for him, Fran.

On receiving Fran's message, Constance looked puzzled.

I'd as soon Tylo would stop away, she said. The kiddies may not fancy him begging for their cake. Still, I'll call.

At the summons from his mistress, Tylo instantly came, causing a sudden silence among the chattering children, silence succeeded by wild shrieks of pleasure.

The beach dog emerged from the garden wearing a wreath of roses around his neck, with an open pink silk parasol fastened to his collar and tipped at a fashionable and coquettish angle over his head and holding firmly in his mouth the handle of a basket filled with as varied an assortment of English sweets as Max could secure in his hasty gallop into St. Helier's.

Connie, too, gave an exclamation of laughter. Oh, look at my best Paris brelly! she groaned. Max stole that. Yvonne never gave it to him.

Fully conscious that he held the center of the stage, Tylo advanced, waving his tail and casting amiable glances upon the children as they came crowding around, buns and cake forgotten. He seemed perfectly to understand what was expected and held the basket until the last sugar plum was secured by little searching hands, then employed to caress the bearer. Max's substitute certainly scored the greatest hit of the Manor bun worry.

From their seclusion in the rose−garden, the two conspirators watched Tylo's successful appearance.

Let's come in and wash, said Max, seeing that no further responsibility remained to them. Or are you keen on a bun worry? I like them, like them awfully, you know, but somehow, I'm afraid Uncle Dick may be lonely. I feel it's my duty to look him up.

Win would have seen through this flimsy excuse without the betrayal of Max's merry eyes, but the proposal chanced to be what he most wished to do. Very gladly he followed Max through the gardens to a side entrance to the house, where they went up to Max's room, a high oak−paneled chamber that would have been sombre were it not for three sunny mullioned casements overlooking the sea. Cases crowded with books stood by the fireplace, fishing rods, cricket bats and oars decorated the walls.

Those aren't mine, said Max, noticing Win's glance as he stood drying his hands; only the skiis and racquets. This was Richard's room, Uncle Dick's only son. He was a subaltern in the British army, just twenty when he was killed in the charge on Majuba Hill. They have always given me his room at the Manor. I fancy Uncle liked to have it occupied by a boy again.

Colonel Lisle himself must have done some fighting, observed Win. How did he lose his arm?

For years he was an officer in India. He lost his arm defending the Khyber Pass against the Afghans.

Max took his guest down the main staircase to the great entrance hall, with its high raftered roof, and stone floor half covered by valuable Oriental rugs. Suits of shining armor lent glints of light; curious spears, ancient swords and firearms, many of them very old, were fastened on walls dark with age. Win stopped to look at the carved mantel over the great fireplace, sporting the leopards of Jersey, the Lisle coat of arms and the date 1509.

Imagine living in a house built all those centuries ago, he sighed. This is older than the library, isn't it?

Somewhat, replied Max. The wing here is the oldest part of the house. Let's come to Uncle's study. I fancy he'll be there.

Colonel Lisle was lounging near the fire, but appeared very willing to put aside his book and welcome the two.

And have you had tea, Uncle? Max inquired. We haven't, and I could do nicely with a cup.

With all those gallons of tea on the lawn, it is a pity if an able−bodied young gentleman couldn't secure one cup, said the Colonel smiling. Now you mention it, I believe I have had none either. Ring the bell by all means and order it. I was absorbed in verifying some points of old Norman law, he added to Win. Our islands have an interesting history.

Win is pleased that Prince Charles has left his mark on Jersey, observed Max, giving the bell−pull a vigorous twitch. Tell him, Uncle, about his stopping here.

Such is the legend handed down from father to son, replied the Colonel. The story goes that the prince was brought to the Manor immediately after landing in Jersey. Just where he landed and how he was conveyed here is not known, but his stay was short. The owner of the Manor at that date, another Richard Lisle, he whose portrait hangs in the library, was an ardent Royalist who would have risked everything to serve his prince. Authorities agree that Charles spent the period of his stay in one of the castles, some say Orgueil, others Elizabeth. Probably the Manor roof sheltered him but for a few hours. I should very much like to see the legend of his stop in this house authenticated beyond question. Max tells me you are fond of books, the speaker continued. After tea, I will show you some of our special treasures.

Win's face, already alight with interest, grew even more responsive to this offer, yet as the tea came, he felt unaccountably stupid and idiotic. Utter disgust with himself filled his mind to think he couldn't get to the point then and there of telling his kind host about that letter he had discovered.

Max noticed that Win was ill at ease, attributed it to shyness or perhaps awe of the Colonel, who was, as Max put it, a bit impressive till a fellow knew him, and tried to help matters by talking nonsense that amazed Win and evidently amused the Colonel. Gradually, as he saw that Max was not in the least afraid of the dignified owner of the Manor, Win began to feel less tongue−tied.

Presently came a sound of gay voices, a tap at the door and Constance, the girls, and Roger entered.

The tea−party is gone and in its place is peace, said Connie. Daddy dear, I want you to meet Frances and Edith. And this is Roger. Max, why didn't you have tea with us and the kiddies?

Because of buns, said Max. My bun−eating days are past.

Not so long past! retorted Constance with a mischievous smile. Not so many years ago that I bribed you with a penny bun to steal a tooth for me out of a skull in the Capuchin church! He did it, too, she added to the girls, laughing delightedly at this charge. You haven't been in Rome? The Capuchin monks have a church there with some holy earth brought from Jerusalem. Years ago, they don't do it now, because modern sanitary laws have

invaded Rome, the monks who died were buried in this earth. Only of course as the centuries passed, there wasn't room for them all, so the monks longest buried had to get up and give place to others. Their bones were arranged in nice neat patterns on the walls, and the skulls heaped in piles. It was a tooth from one of these skulls that I fancied. Max ate the bun and stole the tooth for me, but Daddy wouldn't let me keep it and made Max put it back.

Oh, how could you ever want such a thing, Miss Connie! exclaimed Edith, shuddering with horror.

I wonder, why did I? said Constance reflectively. It certainly doesn't appeal to me now. Mother was shocked; she disinfected everything that tooth had touched. Are you through tea, Daddy? I want to take the girls into the library.

Once again in the old book−room, Win recovered his self−possession in admiration of its treasures of illuminated missal and manuscript. His interest pleased his host, who ended by cordially inviting the boy to visit the Manor library whenever and as often as he chose to come. Win's genuine delight over this permission touched the Colonel, who from his own physical handicap, guessed that life was not always smooth for Win.

Win's pleasure arose not merely from the enjoyment of the library itself but because he would surely grow better acquainted with the Manor family and have a more favorable opportunity to show his discovery in the old Psalter.

He was very quiet on the way home and scarcely spoke while Fran was giving her mother a graphic account of the afternoon. Win hardly knew she was talking until his attention was caught by a dramatic remark.

Miss Connie told us something so exciting, Mother, Fran was saying. Roger asked her if there was a ghost. He blurted it right out and I was quite mortified, because you know if they did have one and were sensitive, it would have seemed impolite. But Miss Connie said right away that the Manor had all modern improvements, including a well−behaved and most desirable ghost. Then she and Mr. Max looked at each other and laughed. She said the haunted room was above the library and promised to give us a chance to investigate some day. I wanted dreadfully to ask about secret stairs, you remember what that boy at Orgueil said but perhaps when we are looking for the ghost there will be a chance to speak of the stairs.

Indeed, you've had a most interesting afternoon, agreed Mrs. Thayne, the discovery of a haunted room at the Manor being not the least.

And what have you done all by yourself, *poor* Mother? said Frances, suddenly sympathetic and affectionate.

Part of the afternoon I was out and since then I have been talking with Estelle. If she only felt she could, it would be so much better for her to go more among people, for the constant effort to be brave when she is so much alone, is very wearing. She seems so pathetically grateful that we chanced to come to her this winter instead of other less congenial lodgers. Sometime I hope she will speak frankly of just how they are situated and whether she has plans beyond this season, for I might be able to further them. And I hope, too, I shall succeed in placing the something familiar that always strikes me in Estelle. Have you ever noticed it, Fran? To my surprise, Win said the other day that Estelle reminded him of some one.

No, said Fran. I never noticed it. But I might ask Edith whether they have any relatives in the United States.

That could do no harm, assented Mrs. Thayne thoughtfully. Since Win spoke of it also, the resemblance must be to some one we know over there.

Frances and her mother went away but Win sat thinking for some moments. The mention of secret stairs recalled to him, though he could not say why, that odd dream twice experienced since he came to Jersey, of a search in a

narrow unfamiliar passage, with unknown companions, for something unspecified.

With a start he finally roused himself and went upstairs. Before going to bed he read again the copy of Richard Lisle's letter.

There's more to this than just the coming of the prince, he thought. That's a fact, but if that 'safe place' can be discovered, I'll warrant we shall find the Spanish Chest and whatever 'relicks' Richard and his 'Sonne' put into it.

CHAPTER XI. THE MANOR CAVE

A few days after the school treat, Maxfield Hamilton was sauntering slowly across the Manor grounds. The January sky above shone blue as in a New England June, gay crocuses starred the short green grass, snowdrops and bluebells were already budded. From heights unknown floated the song of a skylark; in the holly hedge sat an English robin.

Max heard the skylark but did not notice the robin as he stopped at the gates to look down to the sea, stretching to shining horizons under the afternoon sun. His face was thoughtful and rather sober.

The robin gave a little cheep and Max turned to discover the bird almost at his elbow, a tiny scrap of olive feathers and bright red breast, considering him with soft wise eyes, head on one side.

Hello, old chap, Max remarked. What do *you* think of this world?

From the tone, the robin might have inferred that the speaker's opinion was anything but favorable. Considering him for a second, he concluded him inoffensive and began to peck at the glowing holly berries.

Max wandered slowly through the gates and across the Manorhold to the shore, distant at this point about a quarter of a mile. Two or three stone cottages with picturesque straw−thatched roofs lay near the cliffs, property of the Manor and usually occupied by employees.

With the thoughtful expression still on his face, Max passed the cottages to stop on the edge of the cliffs already showing yellow with gorse. Should the tide serve, he had it in mind to revisit a haunt of his boyhood. A moment's scrutiny showed him right in thinking that the tide was on the ebb and he started rapidly down a rough, rather slippery path. As he rounded an outlying rock he came full on Roger Thayne.

Sprawled flat on the sloping cliff, Roger was watching so intently the doings of a spider that he did not look up until a shadow fell squarely across the web.

That you, Roger? said Max. Alone? Where are Win and the girls?

I don't know, replied Roger, flushing uncomfortably. That is, I don't know where the girls are.

Win's not ill, I hope?

No, he isn't. Roger rolled over to look at his visitor. The young face wore a pleasant smile and the gray eyes were friendly, but somehow Roger had a suspicion that Mr. Max wasn't the sort to approve outright truancy.

Win's all right, he added evasively. He's studying or something.

A queer little expression crossed Max's lips. Then since you have a holiday, well−deserved, no doubt, come on

exploring with me.

Roger was on his feet in a second, the arrow of reproof glancing off unnoted. Where are you going? he demanded.

Oh, just down here a few rods. We may have to hold up for the tide. It won't be low water for some time yet.

The faint path presently ended in piles of red granite, still wet from the sea, in places slippery with vraic, as the Jerseymen call the seaweed used as fertilizer for their land.

We shall have to stop a bit, said Max, after a short steep descent. As he spoke he sat down and began to crush a bit of vraic between his fingers.

This seaweed is one of the biggest assets the farmers have, he said to Roger. You'll enjoy being here in February when the great vraic harvest comes. The farmers go down to the shore with carts and a sort of sickle. At low tide the southern shore is black with people cutting the seaweed from the rocks. The carts are used to carry it up beyond tide−mark. Men, women and young people all turn out and it's one of the sights of the island. The harvest lasts for several weeks and for the first few days there is a continual picnic with dancing and all sorts of jollifications.

But I've often seen men gathering seaweed on the beach, said Roger. It isn't February yet.

They are gathering the loose weed that is washed ashore. Any one may take that between the hours of sunrise and sunset, but he must stop at sound of the sunset gun. The cutting from the rocks is regulated by a hallowed custom. In June there's a second harvest when only the poor people may cut the vraic for a few weeks. After they have had their turn anybody may cut it till the last of August.

As he concluded, Max threw away the seaweed and picked up one of the abundant black flint pebbles. For some moments he amused himself by striking sparks from it with the back of a knife blade.

I haven't lost the knack, he remarked. By the way, have you found any flint knives? They turn up occasionally, though more often inland than in a place like this. They are relics of the days when the Druids were in Jersey. You've seen the burial mounds, haven't you, the Dolmens?

I have, said Roger briefly. In Bill Fish's company. Liked the stones all right enough, but Bill can't talk, you know. He expounds.

Max grinned. Bad Writ, that, he agreed. Come along. We can get through now.

[Illustration: THEY CAME UPON THE LOVELIEST OF LITTLE BEACHES]

Climbing carefully around a slippery projecting rock, its base yet submerged, they came upon the loveliest of lovely little beaches, in shape almost a semi−circle, the water forming the bisector and the frowning red cliffs the arc. Near the centre of the half− circle stood two tall pinnacles of red granite. Behind them yawned an entrance about five feet high and under this Max bent his tall head. Roger followed and uttered a whistle of pleasure and amazement.

They stood in a large cave, floored by fine bright yellow sea sand, broken irregularly by out−croppings of rose−pink rock, sand and rock alike wet and glistening. Away to the back of the cave, Roger saw that the floor rose higher. The roof was iridescent with green and yellow lichens; pebbles of jasper, cornelian and agate strewed the sand.

In the twelve years of his existence, Roger had never seen anything like this and surprise rendered him inarticulate.

Some cave! he commented at length. Look, Mr. Max, what are these?

Oh, haven't you met any sea−anemones? The pools are full of them. Jolly little beggars.

Roger was naturally less enthusiastic over the charming water−gardens than the girls when they chanced upon them, but he was considerably interested in the numerous and varicolored snails, their shells bright green or delicate pink, truly entrancing to pick up and examine. By the time Roger finished a somewhat minute inspection his companion was out of sight.

Hello! he shouted in some concern.

Right−oh! came a quiet reply.

Bather abashed by the startling echoes he had evoked, Roger climbed over fallen rocks to the back of the cave. There the floor rose sharply, affording a level apparently beyond reach of the tide, for some tiny land plants had found a lodging, ferns waved from the crannied vault and there was no sign of any marine growth.

This used to be a favorite resort of mine, said Max, who was sitting on the high ledge, some five feet wide. Beyond, the cave ended in a mass of stone and rubble.

Roger's eyes grew wide. What a dandy place! he exclaimed.

Not much compared with the Plemont caves, replied his companion. You'll probably go there before leaving the island. There are five or six of them and one has a waterfall dividing it into two distinct caves. Plemont is the spot where the cable comes in from England, crawls out of the ocean like a great dripping hoary old sea−serpent to trail through a cleft to the station on the cliff above. This is a rat−hole beside those caves.

I'll take steps to go there, said Roger earnestly. Say, does the water ever come up here?

I don't think so. Even at the spring tides, it would probably not reach within two feet of this ledge. Only a rip−snorter of a tempest could endanger goods stored here, or even anybody who chose this cave to hide in.

Some hiding−place, admitted Roger.

So I've found it. When I was about your age, I came down here because I was annoyed with the world in general and stopped between two tides.

Really? gasped Roger. Did you get wet?

Not a bit. I'll admit that things seemed spooky when I'd waited so long that I couldn't get out. I took solid comfort in the ferns and in a sea pink that had put out a scared little blossom right where we are sitting. I was shut in the better part of six hours and time proved a bit slow. I remember coming to the conclusion that perhaps the people I'd left behind weren't so utterly unreasonable after all. I fancy it's a rather sure sign that when you can't rub along with anybody, the trouble isn't altogether with them.

Roger looked at him suspiciously but Max's gaze was bent on the cave entrance, arching over a wonderful view of blue sea.

Do you like to live in Paris? he asked hastily.

I'd rather stop in Rome where my father is, Max replied, suppressing a smile over the sudden change of subject. But Dad runs up occasionally. I feel as though I'd be more use in Rome because there I know everybody who is anybody, you see, and it would be a help to the Embassy. Dad thinks I may be able to work a transfer after a year or so. If the Ambassador to Italy remarks to the State Department at Washington that Maxfield Hamilton seems a likely young chap with both eyes open and that he wouldn't mind having him on his staff, why Max may receive a document telling him to pack his little box and attach his person to the Embassy at Rome.

Roger laughed. Then you don't like Paris?

Oh, yes, said Max thoughtfully. I've had a jolly time socially. I can't imagine anybody in my circumstances not enjoying himself. But it's not where I most want to be. It's up to me to make good so emphatically that they'll hand me on to Rome with a word in my favor.

I expect they will, said Roger.

Not if I don't buckle down, said Max half to himself. Something happened last October that gave me a jolt and it has been hard to stick to work. I came over here for the holidays determined to get myself in hand again. I think I've succeeded, old chap, so I'd better go back and dig in. A man mustn't whine, you know, if it looks jolly final that he isn't going to have everything he wants. I've wasted time enough. I must go back to Paris now and keep my mind on my job.

I bunked Bill Fish this afternoon, admitted Roger suddenly.

No doubt he was a frightful bore, commented Max without showing the least surprise. Probably I'd have done the same in your place. The only disadvantage about shying at disagreeable things like tutors is that one hardly ever gets rid of them after all. I'm becoming convinced that the only way to get round a difficulty is to hit it in the head and walk over its flattened corpse.

Roger grinned. Shall I bat Bill Fish? he asked.

Bill Fish might be worse. Don't blame you for feeling him a freak, but the schools in Jersey are footy affairs. If you want a fair sample of a school you'd have to try England proper. We've messed about here long enough. Let's take a swim.

Does the cave end here? asked Roger, looking at the pile of broken stone beyond the shelf.

I suppose so. It's the only one on the Manor lands so Connie and I liked to come. Uncle Dick wouldn't permit it unless a grown person was with us to watch the tide. How about a dip? No one can see us.

Max left the ridge to saunter toward the entrance, stopping to investigate more than one pool of anemones. By the way, he added, I wouldn't tell the girls of this cave. They'll be keen on searching for it afternoons when they are free and you aren't, and may get into a mess with the tides. Really it's not quite safe.

[Illustration: PLEMONT IS THE SPOT WHERE THE CABLE COMES IN FROM ENGLAND]

All right, agreed Roger, sliding from the shelf. As he did so, a sudden current of warm air struck him, quite unlike the rather damp, salty atmosphere of the cave. His curiosity was sufficiently aroused to cause him to stop and look back, but Max had already begun to undress and there seemed no possible place for a sweet land breeze to find entrance.

CHAPTER XII. WIN VISITS THE LIBRARY

Max's abrupt departure two days later was a great disappointment to Win, who admired him greatly and coveted a closer acquaintance. That he should cut short his stay on the plea of work to be done seemed reasonable to the others but his going quite upset Win. Nor was this disappointment lightened by a period of semi−invalidism when all exertion was difficult and patience very far to seek. Not for some weeks after Max left was Win able to take advantage of the Colonel's prized invitation to use the Manor library.

He made his first visit, fully determined to broach the discovery of Richard Lisle's letter to either the Colonel or his daughter, whichever should appear, but Yvonne, who admitted him with a smiling welcome, reported neither at home.

Nor did fortune favor his second attempt. The Colonel was in St. Helier's and Constance entertaining a group of young people on the lawn. Win dodged these visitors and from the library windows looked down upon a lively set of tennis. Players and spectators alike seemed to know one another extremely well. The inference Win drew was correct, that for some reason, the little lady of the Manor chose just now to crowd her life with social engagements and gay festivities.

Time had been when Win didn't care to watch others play games he could not share, but Win was learning that every life has its compensations; when one is debarred from one thing, he is sure to have another in its place. Without envy Win watched them for a time before turning to the books.

His third visit was made on a morning in early February when walking was rather difficult owing to a penetrating rain. Wintry weather seemed to have visited the Island, but the cold was deceptive, for though a heavy coat was acceptable, plenty of flowers were in blossom, even a number of surprised−looking roses.

On reaching the Manor, Win was admitted by cordial Yvonne, who at once conducted him to his sanctuary. The room was empty, but a cheery fire glowed on the hearth, and on the long bare black oak table stood an enormous copper bowl full of fresh daffodils, making a spot of light and beauty in the sombre room.

Win spent a few moments warming his hands at the fire and considering thoughtfully the back of the old Psalter in which was shut Richard Lisle's letter. Perhaps opportunity would favor him to−day, some chance be provided to show that discovery to either Miss Connie or her father.

That its contents referred to Prince Charles was established beyond doubt by the existing legend of his entertainment at the Manor, but the letter said much more than that. Only some one thoroughly familiar with the Manor and its possessions could interpret further. As the rain beat on the terrace outside, Win chanced to look up at the portrait near the fireplace, and instantly recalled that curious dream.

I dreamed all that stuff just because I've always been crazy to go treasure−hunting, he thought, and because that old Cavalier was the last thing I saw before I went to sleep. Well, I might go and read for a while.

With a glance of admiration at some fine old armor passed on the way, Win went into the farther room to settle himself on the comfortable window seat with a fat history of the island of Jersey.

Fully an hour passed before the sound of low voices penetrated his consciousness. Gradually he became aware that two people were now occupying the seat before the smouldering fire. One was Constance Lisle, the other some one Win had never seen before, a dark distinguished−looking young man, evidently of foreign blood.

Connie was leaning back in the corner of the old settle, her white dress and the neighboring bowl of daffodils

standing out as high lights in the shadowy surroundings. Her companion, beside her, was bending slightly forward, his face turned eagerly toward hers.

Had he wished to listen, Win could not distinguish the low words. That fact absolved him from the necessity of making his presence known, for leave he could not without passing through the room. Presently the young man raised his voice and Win realized that he was speaking in Italian.

For the moment, interest in the present dismissed the past. Win had heard the girls' chatter about their adored Miss Connie and the romance attributed to her by Mrs. Trott, but boy−like, paid very little attention to what he considered the foolish fancies of sentimental kids. Now he was startled into sudden interest.

That stranger must be Miss Connie's Italian prince. Very handsome and very much of a gentleman he looked and most earnest their conversation. Yet even to an inexperienced observer, it was not that of two happy young people, entering a sunny stretch of life, but of a boy and girl confronted with some stern and very present problem. Connie's hands were clasped too tightly, there was a sense of strain in the poise of her head. Her companion's pose was one of perplexity and doubt.

Win remembered what else he had heard of that rumored engagement, not much to be sure, save that strong pressure was being put upon the last of the Santo−Pontes in order to secure the estates and title of a great Roman house to the church of his ancestors.

Presently Win realized that he had no right even to look on. He turned his face to the storm and again buried himself in his old volume.

A long time later he heard his name and Constance strolled alone through the arch from the other room. She looked pale and tired but otherwise composed.

I didn't know you were here, Win, she said as she came to his chosen window.

I've been stuck in this book for ages. Miss Connie, I've found the most interesting thing ever.

What is it? Connie inquired listlessly, wondering, but not particularly caring whether Win knew of her interview with Louis di Santo−Ponte. She looked sweet and wistful as she stood leaning against the window seat, her mind down in the town where the boat for St. Malo was getting up steam. Tell me about it, Win, she added, recalling her wandering thoughts. She liked Win as she liked most young people.

Come and see, said Win, replacing his history in its case. Connie accompanied him to the fireplace in the main room.

Did you ever look at that book? he inquired, indicating the worn old Psalter.

There are several thousand books here that I never looked at, said Connie promptly. Max is the one who browses in this part of the library. Ah, he's been here lately, reading his horrid old German philosophers. With an air of disgust she pointed to the blue−bound modern volumes.

What is this book that interests you so much! she went on, taking It from the shelf. Oh, an old copy of the Psalms. Look at its odd type.

It isn't the book that interests me, said Win, but this paper. I found it accidentally. Do read it, Miss Connie, and see what you make of it.

After her first perusal, Constance grew as excited as Win. With the deliberate purpose of putting her troubles from her mind, she concentrated her attention on this discovery.

The prince of course refers to Charles, because it is an historical fact that he took refuge in Jersey, began Win.

Yes, and there's the legend that he was entertained here at the Manor, exclaimed Connie. Why Dad will be crazy about this, for it proves that story!

I hoped he'd be pleased, said Win happily.

Oh, he will! replied Connie. Charles was just a boy, only sixteen, at the time he fled from England.

Ever since I saw two letters in the British Museum, Charles the Second has seemed a very real person to me, said Win smiling. Do you know them, Miss Connie? One is from Queen Henrietta Maria to Prince Charles, expressing great regret that the prince has refused to take the 'physick' prescribed for him, and hoping that he will consent to do so on the following day, for if he didn't she should be obliged to come to him and she trusted he would not give her that 'paine.' She had also requested the Duke of Newcastle to report to her whether he took it or not and so she 'rested.'

But what I liked best, Win went on, was the letter Prince Charles wrote. He evidently didn't reply to his mother, but sent a note to the Duke of Newcastle in which he flatly refused to take the 'physick' and advised the Duke not to take any either!

Connie laughed. That does seem a touch of real boy nature, doesn't it? But I'm afraid Prince Charles was rather a rotten young cub, not worth the affection expended on him nor the good lives laid down in his cause. The Richard Lisle who wrote this letter was my great−great oh, I don't know how many times removed grandfather! It's plain that Prince Charles came here to the Manor, was fed and provided with a change, and escorted to the castle, probably Orgueil. But what the 'relicks' are and what the 'safe place,' I can't tell. Nor do I know what is meant by the Spanish chest. If there was anything of that description around the Manor I'd jolly well know it.

Would Colonel Lisle know? asked Win eagerly.

I wonder, will he? mused Connie after a pause spent in close scrutiny of the document. We'll ask. Anyway, he'll be awfully interested because here it is in black and white that Prince Charles was brought to the Manor. Win, it's storming desperately and I'm bored to death. I'm going to send Pierre to St. Aubin's to tell your mother that you won't be back for luncheon. We'll show Dad your find and bring our united minds to bear on the problem.

Win was sorely tempted. The walk through the storm had taxed his strength. Should he struggle back, the chances were that he would be too tired for any lessons after his arrival.

Your tutor won't matter, will he? asked Connie. You're not expected to be so regular as Roger.

Wingate grinned. I was thinking how angry Roger will be if he finds himself the sole object of Bill Fish's attention this afternoon. Thank you, Miss Connie. I want mightily to stay. I ought not to have come up here today when it was storming, but since I'm here the wisest thing is to wait for a time. And I'm wild to know what your father thinks of this paper. I will send a note to Mother if I may.

I'll write, too, said Constance, and I shall tell her that we'll keep you all night if the rain continues. I need somebody to play with me, Win. I'm jolly glad you did brave the storm.

CHAPTER XIII. ABOUT THE SPANISH CHEST

Roger's state of mind at finding himself destined to be the sole object of Bill Fish's ministrations that afternoon was laughable. He vowed to Frances that he also would take French leave and bitterly denounced Win for absconding, declaring it a put up job.

Perhaps Mr. Fisher won't come, consoled Frances. The storm has really grown much worse since morning.

Indeed he will, said Roger darkly. Fishes like water. I only hope he'll wipe his fins when he comes in. The last rainy day he dripped all over the room. I was 'most drowned before we finished. But it was mean and sneaky of Win to go up to the Manor this morning. He might have known that I wanted help with my arithmetic.

Perhaps I can help, offered Frances. Luncheon just over, the unwelcome Mr. Fisher was due in twenty minutes.

Oh, you may try, conceded Roger ungraciously. But if Win stays up there all night, I'll pay him out.

Mother thinks from Miss Connie's note that they were doing something very interesting and she really wanted him, Fran said lazily, her face pressed against the pane. How angry and gray the water looks.

I've a great mind to bunk, said Roger gloomily. It's not fair for me to work alone all the afternoon.

Edith and I have been at school all the morning, said the peace−making Frances. And Win does work when he can; he never really shirks, Roger.

He *likes* to study, grumbled Roger. I don't.

There are so many things you can do that Win can't, reminded his sister.

Don't preach, retorted Roger, but Fran's comment recalled to his mind the conversation with Max in the cave. Boy−like, Roger would not admit even to himself any repentance for his short−comings on that occasion, but the recollection served to smooth his present ruffled feelings. Win had worked alone with Bill Fish all that afternoon and Roger remembered most distinctly how Mr. Max looked when he said he was going back to Paris and waste no more time.

Win is having fun, I'm sure, said Fran at length. Miss Connie promised Edith and me that we shall come up and sleep in the haunted room some night if we like.

What's it haunted by? demanded Roger.

She wouldn't tell us. Says if we know, we'll be sure to see things. But she is going to have a bed put up for herself and come in with us, so I'm sure it's nothing very dreadful. I'm so glad we came to Jersey just so we could know Miss Connie.

Some girl, admitted Roger. But she can't hold a candle to Mr. Max. He's a corker.

He is nice, Frances agreed. But show me your arithmetic. And would you like me to sit in the room? Perhaps Mr. Fisher won't be so fierce if I am there.

I would not, was her brother's concise reply. He isn't fierce either; he's merely flappy. I tell you he *is* a fish. He looks exactly like one of those flatfish we catch down in Maine. Eyes both on one side.

Nothing more unlike the tall, angular Scotch tutor could possibly have been mentioned, but Fran suppressed a laugh as she inspected Roger's problems in mathematics.

Me doing arithmetic! he groaned. And Win having the time of his life at the Manor!

If not exactly experiencing such bliss, Win was thoroughly enjoying himself. After luncheon in the charming old Manor dining− room with a cheerful fire dispelling all gloom caused by the rain on the windows, the three adjourned to Colonel Lisle's study, where Win placed upon the table his discovery. The Colonel read it with great interest.

Well, that is a valuable document, Win, he admitted. It is evidently a page from a letter that Richard Lisle, fourth, wrote to some one and never sent. I am the ninth Richard, so you see how far back that was. Of course it refers to the Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles II of England. It is a curious fact in the history of the Channel Islands that Guernsey sided with the Parliament in its dispute with the king, while Jersey remained royalist to the core. I am under great obligations to you for discovering this paper, for it proves beyond doubt the legend that I have always wished to see substantiated, that Prince Charles came to Laurel Manor.

Don't you make out, Daddy, that they gave him other clothes and took him to the castle? asked his daughter.

Without doubt. Orgueil, or possibly Castle Elizabeth. I believe that the consensus of opinion now favors Elizabeth as having been the prince's refuge.

What do you make of the rest of it, sir? asked Win, who was still beaming with happiness over the Colonel's appreciation. It says in so many words that they put something in a chest and hid it until the trouble was over.

That much is plain, replied his host thoughtfully. The paper was spread upon his desk and the young people sat on either side. Win's attention was distracted for a moment by his view of the Colonel's distinguished face, the face of an high−bred English gentleman. With all the impetuosity of his American birth and training, Win felt the charm of this gentleman of other race and another generation. He admired the Colonel's complete repose, his courteous ways and softly modulated voice. They were not in the least effeminate and the empty sleeve and the little bronze Victoria cross bore witness that the Colonel was a very gallant officer.

I think, began Constance, that Great−great−grandfather Dick and his 'Sonne' put the prince's clothes and perhaps some other things in a chest and hid them. Dad, did you ever know of anything answering to the description of 'ye Spanish chest'?

The Colonel thoughtfully smoothed his gray mustache. There is the box that came from the Armada, he remarked. But that cannot be the one referred to, since that belonged to your mother, my dear, and comes from her side of the house.

Mummy was Irish, Connie explained to Win. I'll show you that box. It really was washed up on the coast of Ireland and has been in her family for centuries. No, of course, it couldn't be that.

A Spanish chest does not necessarily mean a relic of the Armada, went on the Colonel. There might possibly be a box of Spanish workmanship, but I know of none in the Manor to which that description could be applied. That big black oak chest in the upper hall is English. The one in my room is Flemish.

Oh, those are both too big, anyway, declared Constance. Even men in a hurry wouldn't take a box as big as those to pack a suit of clothes in. No, it was something that could be easily carried and concealed. It takes four servants to move those great arks.

Then, if there isn't anything in the Manor that answers the description, don't you believe the chest and the things in it are still hidden? Win asked rather shyly, but with keen interest.

The Colonel smiled kindly. Sorry to quench your enthusiasm, Win, he said, but I doubt it. Prince Charles landed in Jersey in 1646 if my memory serves. Subtract that date from this year of our Lord. I'm afraid that chest, whatever it was, has long since emerged from its hiding−place. According to the document here, it was concealed only till 'happier times should dawne.' Prince Charlie came to his own again, you remember. This Richard Lisle died somewhere where about 1675. He lived to see the Restoration, so surely he or his son brought to light again the things that there was no longer reason to conceal.

But, Daddy, said Constance quickly, noticing the look of disappointment on Win's expressive face. People forget. Let's think of all the possibilities. It says some place outside the walls. And they needed a lantern.

There is the cave, daughter, at the edge of the Manor estates, but you know all about that. Why, I know that cave myself, I was going to say, every grain of sand in it.

That's true, admitted Connie. And of course in all the centuries, numbers of people have been there.

Considering the brisk trade in smuggling that was done in Jersey during the 1700's, I think the chances of finding anything in the Manor cave are very small, agreed her father. There is one thing, though, we might look at.

As he spoke, he rose and produced his keys. Swinging back a portrait on hinges, he disclosed a small safe built into the wall. Win was silent through interest in this novel way of concealing a strong−box, but Constance jumped up.

What are you looking for. Daddy? Oh, the plans of the Manor.

You see, said the Colonel to Win as he sat clown again, a discolored roll of papers in his hand, the original Manor house has been added to from time to time. Let us see what it comprised in the days when Richard Lisle read his Psalter and wrote his letter. It is possible that something then outside the wall may now be inside the house.

There's a number of queer things about this old place, said Connie, sharing Win's look of expectation. Max and I have run a good many of them to earth, but there may be something yet. Certainly we never stumbled on any Spanish chest.

The two young people helped the Colonel spread the plans and arrange paper−weights to keep them flat.

This comprises not only the house itself but the grounds, he began. They run as you see to the cliffs of the bay. The cave is there.

I never knew that, said Win. Is it large?

Nothing like Plemont or even La Grecq, Constance replied. Those are the show caves of Jersey. There are many as big as ours. It's a rather rough walk, Win, and the cave is accessible only at low tide. I did say something about it once to Edith and Frances, but they didn't understand, and after they were caught by the tide, I thought it would be better for them not to know of it. You see one can get shut in till the next low water. There's no danger because the vault is so high that the tide doesn't fill it. In fact, Max deliberately stopped there once.

Was he shut in? asked Win.

No, said the Colonel smiling. He was annoyed with me and took that method of expressing his displeasure. I fancy he was a trifle surprised that no fuss was made over his exploit. You see, I knew he was perfectly safe. Connie, I think that path is possible for Win some day when the weather and tide both serve. Well, this is the extent of the original house. It includes this wing where we are and the main portion. These shaded partitions show distinctly where later additions have been made.

What is this tiny dotted line across the grounds? Win inquired.

That? It is a footpath toward the shore and the gardener's cottage. I should say that the present path curves more, but that is its direction in general.

Win was puzzled by this explanation. Why should only one of the Manor paths be marked? That it was the sole one existing at the time the plans were drawn seemed scarcely possible.

That 'safe place,' if it was outside the walls in those days would probably have been somewhere underground, commented Connie, after the map had been exhaustively discussed. That might mean that it is now in the cellars somewhere. Dad, have we your permission to explore all the subterranean caverns?

If there are any that you haven't already investigated, said the amused Colonel. I didn't suppose there was a square inch of the place that you and Max hadn't by heart.

I thought so, too, said Constance, but if Win's theories are correct, there must be something we have overlooked. What do you say about an exploration, Win?

Oh, I should like nothing better, said Win eagerly. It will be great sport to hunt for that chest. And it's so interesting to look around a house that has been in the same family for centuries.

There has been a Richard Lisle of Laurel Manor for over four hundred years, said the Colonel rather sadly. I am the last of a long line.

The only solution, said Constance quickly, is for your unworthy daughter to marry some perfectly insignificant person, who will as a part of the marriage contract, take the name of Lisle.

The man who marries my daughter, replied the Colonel with gentle dignity, will have an honorable and, I trust, an honored name of his own to offer her.

Else he will never get her, commented Connie with charming impertinence. Daddy dear, if I could find a man one half as nice as you are, I'd marry him on the spot! Win, we'll arrange to head an exploring expedition. It's too cold and spooky in the cellars to do it this afternoon. We'll plan for a time when Roger and the girls can share the sport. I wish Max was here, too. He would simply dote on it

I wish he was! sighed Win. I was dreadfully disappointed when I heard he had gone. I think he's about right.

A sudden very charming smile broke over Connie's face. Up to that time, it had been rather serious. If we don't solve the problem before the Easter holidays, she said, Max will be keen on running it down. I hope he can come then. He took so long at Christmas that I'm afraid they'll dock him at Easter, and I shall be completely desolated if that happens.

I think he will come, said the Colonel. In fact he told me he might be able to get away for an occasional week−end. With a fast car it is not so far to Granville or even St. Malo and he need waste no time waiting for the steamer.

Constance suddenly sat up straight. Max mustn't neglect his duties, she declared. Either he has a very indulgent chief or he is hedging.

Her attitude was so comically severe that Win laughed, and her father looked up with a smile.

I can't be responsible for what Max tells his chief, he remarked, but I know enough about the diplomatic service to feel sure he is giving satisfaction.

Constance still looked stern. It's all right, of course, if he really earns his week−end, she conceded, but I won't have him shirking. In October he was so serious and quiet that I didn't know what to think of him, but at Christmas he was the same dear boy he used to be. Didn't you think he was just like his old self?

The Colonel thus appealed to, returned her smile. There were moments, he gravely replied, when I doubted whether either one of you was more than sixteen.

CHAPTER XIV. IN THE VAULTS

When Win finally appeared at Rose Villa, driven down in a closed carriage, the tale he related was of sufficient interest to banish from even Roger's mind the resentment he considered but just, after his long afternoon with Mr. Fisher. Those hours had been profitable, did Roger only choose to admit the fact, for the tutor had managed to galvanize into life the dry bones of an epoch in history. Roger would not acknowledge it even to himself, but on that stormy day he came rather near liking Bill Fish.

That's a most exciting discovery, Win, said Mrs. Thayne when the tale was concluded. But I'm afraid I agree with Colonel Lisle that the chances of finding anything are small, though you will have fun exploring. It is very kind of the Colonel and Miss Connie to permit such a troop to invade the Manor.

I think they are just as interested themselves, Win replied. The Colonel was immensely pleased to have that legend confirmed.

Mrs. Thayne looked at him rather wistfully, wondering how much of the interest displayed by the Manor family was due to sympathy with Win. No doubt they liked him, for people always did. Well, she was glad that this unusual experience was coming his way.

I'm crazy to see that cave! Frances was saying. Don't you remember, Edith, when we first met Miss Connie on the beach, she said something about looking for caves? I suppose she was thinking of this one.

I've been in it, Roger suddenly announced. Mr. Max took me. It's a very decent cave but there's only one place where a box could be hidden, on a sort of ledge above the water. We climbed up and if there had been so much as a snitch of a chest about, it couldn't have escaped us.

You've been *in* the cave? demanded Frances, pouncing upon him. When did Mr. Max take you? Where were the rest of us? Why didn't you tell us?

Roger looked uncomfortable. He had never mentioned that expedition, not even to his mother during a very serious conversation on the sin of truancy.

Oh, I met him on the cliff, he said evasively. He showed me the cave and we went swimming. He is a corking swimmer.

But why didn't you tell us about it? persisted Frances.

Roger saw no way out. Being a truthful individual he blurted forth the facts.

Because Mr. Max told me not to. He said it wasn't safe and he was afraid you girls would go fooling around and get caught by the tide. It isn't a fit place for girls, either! he added largely.

It is! retorted the exasperated Frances. If it wasn't, Miss Connie wouldn't have been there.

I'd wager that Miss Connie did everything Mr. Max did, chuckled Win. But the Colonel said to−day that the cave was out of the question so far as any hidden chest was concerned, that it couldn't have escaped discovery all these years. I don't really expect to find anything, Mother, but it will be great fun to look. I've always wanted to search for hidden treasure, you know. And Miss Connie seemed as interested as I was. She has appointed next Wednesday afternoon to explore the vaults. We are all to come at three and stay for tea afterwards. At first she suggested that we have it in the cellars, said it would be nice and cobwebby and befitting a treasure hunt, but then she remembered that Yvonne was afraid of spiders and wouldn't fancy taking the tea things down, he ended with a laugh.

Win was tired that evening and went upstairs early. When Roger clattered into the adjoining room half an hour later, his brother called.

Oh, you, Roger, he said, come in here a jiff.

With a terrific yawn, Roger appeared in the doorway. Win was in bed, a lighted lamp on a table by his pillow.

Could I get down to that cave? he asked.

You could get down, Roger remarked judicially. It's rather steep but there's only one bad rock. Still, he added, if you waited till the tide was even lower, yon could walk round that. When we came back from our swim, that bit of cliff was out of water. It would be some tug crawling up, but you could take it easy.

I'd give a good deal to get down there, said Win thoughtfully. How was it inside? Much climbing? Any place where a box could be tucked out of sight?

Roger proceeded to describe the interior of the cave, arousing Win's interest still more.

I don't suppose there's hide nor hair of that chest around, he admitted, but all the same, I want to take a look. The tide is full every morning now and it will be the end of the week before we can get down. As soon as we can, I wish you'd do the pilot act.

Oh, I'll show you, assented Roger, again yawning prodigiously. I don't take any special stock in this hidden chest, but the cave is fine and I'll like to take a whack at the Manor cellars. Are you going to burn that lamp all night?

I am going to read for a while, said his brother, taking a book from under his pillows. Shut the door into your room if it annoys you.

It doesn't, answered Roger. I can see to undress by it better than with my candle. Ridiculous to have only candles in bedrooms! Mother would give me Hail Columbia if I read in bed the way you do.

Win suppressed a sigh. Mother knows I read only when I can't sleep, he said shortly. You may not believe it, but I'd much rather sleep.

Wednesday afternoon found an expectant quartette walking up the Manor road, slowly because Win paused occasionally to regain breath, but there were so many lovely things to look at that no delay seemed irksome. To begin with were fascinating cottages with neat little box−edged gardens and straw−thatched roofs; curious evergreen trees with stiff jointed branches known locally as monkey−puzzles; there were pretty children, some of whom waved hands of recognition; there were skylarks singing in the blue above, their happy notes falling like musical rain; there were big black and white magpies and black choughs, rooks and corbies, now known to the young people by their English names. And always there were glimpses of the ever−changing, changeless sea.

Roger, who had gradually forged ahead, remained leaning over a low cottage wall until the others came up. In the yard sat a woman milking one of the pretty, soft−eyed Jersey cows, but what held Roger's fascinated attention was her milk−pail.

Instead of the ordinary tin receptacle familiar to Roger during country summers, she had an enormous copper can with a fat round body, rather small top and handle at one side like a bloated milk− jug. Over the top was tied loosely a piece of coarse cloth and on this rested a clean sea shell. Streams of milk directed into the shell slowly overflowed its edges to strain through the cloth and subside gently into the can.

That's something of a milk pail, observed Roger approvingly.

It's just like the hot−water jugs Annette brings in the morning, said Frances, only ten times bigger. Wouldn't it be lovely for goldenrod and asters? I'm going to ask Mother to buy one.

Pretty sight you'll be walking up the dock at Boston with that on your arm, jeered Roger. It will never go in any trunk and you'll have to carry it everywhere you go. You needn't ask me to lug it, either.

It can be crated and sent that way, said Frances calmly.

Those hot−water jugs make me tired, Roger went on as they continued their walk. I'm sick to death of having a quart of lukewarm water in a watering−pot dumped at my door every morning. Think of the hot water we have at home, gallons and gallons of it, steaming, day or night!

Edith looked politely incredulous. How can that be? she asked. Do you keep coals on the kitchen fire all night?

Coals! snorted Roger. All we have to do is to turn a faucet and that lights a heater and the water runs hot as long as you leave it turned on. No quart pots for us!

But surely, said Edith, only very wealthy people can have luxuries like that.

We're not made of money but we have it, retorted Roger. Even workmen have hot−water heaters in their houses.

From Edith's face it was plain that she frankly didn't believe him and Win tried to make matters better.

You see, Edith, he explained, it is much more difficult in the United States to get satisfactory servants and so we have all sorts of clever mechanical devices that make it easier to manage with fewer maids.

Edith's brow cleared. Oh, I see, she said. I thought there must be some reason. Of course, if we needed them, we would have such arrangements in England.

England, declared Roger bluntly, in ways of living is about two hundred years behind the United States!

Roger! exclaimed the shocked Frances.

Cut it out! ordered Win.

It's true, anyway, retorted the annoyed Roger, and there's another thing. We licked England for keeps in the Revolutionary War!

Only because you were English yourselves! flashed Edith before Roger's scandalized family could remind him of his forgotten manners.

This retort disconcerted Roger and delighted Win.

You've hit the nail on the head, Edith, he declared approvingly. England could never have been beaten except by her own sons. And England's navy has always ruled the seas.

How about Dewey wiping out the Spanish fleet at Manila? demanded Roger still huffily,

That reminds me, said Win coolly. I believe it was an English admiral who backed Dewey up at Manila when the Germans tried to butt in. After that battle somebody wrote a poem about it and wrote the truth, too. This is what he said:

'Ye may trade by land, ye may fight by land,
Ye may hold the land in fee;
But go not down to the sea in ships
To battle with the free;
For England and America
Will keep and hold the sea!'

As Win concluded, Edith's high color lessened and Roger looked less pugnacious. Presently, each stole a sly glance at the other, both were caught in the act and simultaneously laughed. So the party reached the Manor without disruption by the way.

Constance, with a soft green sweater over her frock, came to meet them.

All ready for the fray? Leave your hats in the hall. You will need your woollies for we are going where sunlight never comes. There's good store of candles and two lanterns. Anything else needed, Win?

A hammer perhaps, suggested Win. We may want to sound walls.

A hammer there shall be, and Constance rang the bell to order it. Dad says he will come down if we make any startling discovery, but being an elderly person, he's a bit shy of damp.

Provided with lights and the hammer, the gay party started, filing through a kitchen so fascinating with its red−bricked floor and shining copper cooking utensils that Fran found it hard to pass. Several maids and a jolly cook smiled on them as they vanished down the cellar stairs.

I suppose you want to see the oldest part of the Manor vaults, Connie said to Win as she led the way with a candle in a brass reflector. We shall come back through here.

To Edith and Frances it seemed that they traversed numberless dark rooms, dry but chilly, some stored with vegetables and barrels, while others were empty or showed dusky apparitions of old lumber. Constance stopped at last.

We are under the library now, Win. This is the original cellar and you can see how much rougher the workmanship is than in the newer parts.

Walls were rough and floor uneven, indeed, a part of it was composed of an outlying ledge of the Jersey granite. Obedient to suggestion, Roger and the girls began to inspect the walls for traces of some former exit; Roger by himself, the girls, rather fearfully, together. Win stood looking at the ledge in the floor.

That settles there being any hiding−place underneath, he remarked.

Yes, said Connie, but the paper said 'beyond the walls,' you know. So wouldn't it more likely be in one of the cellars not built at that time?

Well, probably, assented Win. But I was looking at the way this rock runs. He produced a pocket−compass. It's much thicker at this end and the direction is approximately north and south. What is to the east, Miss Connie?

Nothing at all. That wall is still the outer one.

And the wall farthest from the water? asked Win quickly.

Constance nodded.

Then it is the western wall I want, said Win, turning toward it.

Somewhat mystified, Connie watched him make a minute examination, tapping with the hammer on its entire length.

I suspect that it's frightfully thick, she said as he stopped, looking disappointed.

What is on the other side? he inquired. Is this whole partition now included in the house?

Constance led the way to the opposite side of the wall. There lay a large apartment, dimly lighted, but of better workmanship and finish. Win went immediately to the eastern side of this cellar and bestowed upon the partition stones the same minute inspection.

This wall must really be several feet through, he observed to the watching Constance.

Probably. But I don't see, Win, what you are trying to get at.

I hardly know myself, Miss Connie. It's just an idea I had. This would have been the wall nearest the cave. You see I'm not used to having a cave as a sort of household annex, so I can't help thinking it may figure yet in this business.

Connie shook her head. Perhaps it did once, she said. Only that cave is more or less common property; many people know of it. We can be sure of one thing; that nothing will be found in it now. How about this floor?

Win left the wall to inspect by aid of his lantern the huge, roughly−squared blocks forming the cellar floor. Damp, dark and numerous they showed under the light.

It's possible that any one might conceal some cavity, said Connie. But that one would surely differ in some way from the others. Let us spread out and inspect them. Anybody who finds a flag in any way peculiar, speak.

Constance herself began to peer at the stone flooring, not at all because she expected to find anything in the least unusual, but because she did not want disappointment to fall upon Win too quickly. If he really searched thoroughly, he would be better satisfied to acknowledge the quest as useless.

Among the many scenes those centuries−old walls had looked upon, it is a question whether they had witnessed so gay a sight as the five young people, wandering slowly up and down the uneven floor, looking for some stone raised higher or sunken lower than the others, more carefully fitted; perhaps, though this could scarcely be hoped, provided with an iron ring for a handle.

Nothing happened. No two of the many flags were alike, yet none seemed of sufficient distinction to mark it as worth further investigation. All looked as though they had never been moved.

The other and more recent cellars received scanty attention. Of lesser age, they were also cleaner, drier and better lighted.

Our adventure seems fruitless sighed Connie as they stood at last among bins and bottles near the kitchen stairs. Why, where is Win?

Both Frances and Roger started back, ashamed to have forgotten him if only for a moment. Suppose poor Win had had one of his attacks alone back there in that shadow−filled vault!

Win was found in the original cellar of the old Manor, not pacing the floor or tapping the stones, but meditatively staring at one of its walls, not the one he had devoted so much attention to, but the northern boundary.

What luck? asked Connie as they came in, relieved at sight of him.

None, said Win, turning to her with curiously bright eyes. But, Miss Connie, do you think your father would show me those plans again!

Why, of course he will. Has some idea struck you?

I don't quite know, said Win. But I should like to see the plans and perhaps some other day, you'll let me come down here again for a few moments.

CHAPTER XV. THE HAUNTED ROOM

There is a letter for you, Miss Edith, said Nurse as the girls came in from school, the next Saturday. It is for Miss Frances, too.

For us both? exclaimed Frances. Where from?

Pierre brought it from the Manor, replied Nurse.

I can't get over there being no telephones in the houses here, remarked Frances, snatching off her hat. Imagine having to send a man with a note instead of just taking down a receiver and talking. Not to have telephones is so very English.

The English don't hold much with new inventions, Miss, Nurse agreed. What was good enough for those before us does us very well.

I know it! sighed Fran, but think of the *convenience* of a telephone.

Edith was holding a dainty square note bearing the inscription:

Miss Edith Pearce,
Miss Thayne,
Rose Villa.
A la main de Pierre.

From Miss Connie, of course, said Edith delightedly. Each took a corner of the enclosed card and with several little squeals of amused pleasure, Frances read it aloud.

Miss Lisle presents her compliments to Miss Pearce and Miss
Thayne and requests them to grant her the favor of attending
a meeting of the Society for the Suppression of Ghosts to be
held in the haunted room of Laurel Manor this evening at ten.

Notes:

Dinner 7:30.
Beds provided at 9:45 (Ghost *not* guaranteed to appear).
Very best nighties because of looking pretty for spooks.
Breakfast any old hour.

Screaming with delight, Edith ran to find Estelle, Frances for her mother.

But I don't know that I want you to sleep in a room that has the reputation of being haunted, Edith, protested Estelle. Will Mrs. Thayne permit Frances to go?

Oh, Sister, there's some joke about it, pleaded Edith. There must be, because Miss Connie always laughs whenever the ghost is mentioned. And would her father let her sleep in that room if it was anything to frighten people? Oh, Star, it will be such fun!

Up−stairs, Frances was besieging her amused mother. Two minutes later, the girls met in the hall, dancing with glee, for each might go were the other permitted.

Dinner at the Manor, too! sighed Frances. What bliss!

Neither Estelle nor Mrs. Thayne had much peace from then until it was time to start. Finally the hour arrived and the family assembled in the hall to see them off, Win interested and Roger openly envious. I'd like a chance at that ghost just once, he vowed. I'd settle him.

Perhaps later, Miss Connie will invite you boys, said Edith. Why, here's Pierre. Oh, he's come for our bags.

To have a servant sent for their light luggage again struck Frances as most charmingly English, and two very happy girls waved farewell to Rose Villa as they turned out of the terrace.

In the great hall of the Manor, Constance greeted them, ceremoniously enough, but with mysterious smiles and twinkles. In person she conducted them to a pretty guest−room near her own apartments.

We won't invade the ghost's domain until time for bed, she announced gayly. You'll find a bath adjoining and would you like Paget to do your hair or fasten your dinner frocks?

We will help each other, said Edith, as full of twinkles as Connie herself.

Then I will dress and come for you in about half an hour.

Isn't Miss Connie the dearest thing! said Edith enthusiastically as the door closed. I never saw anybody just like her before.

Mother thinks her charming, replied Frances, brushing her curly hair. Edith, do you suppose we shall ever know the truth about that story of the Italian prince?

It doesn't seem as though it were true, observed Edith. Or at least, as though she cared very much if she had to break her engagement, for she is always so gay and happy.

The face that was looking just then from the mirror in Connie's room did not precisely correspond to these adjectives, but the young mistress of the Manor was the daughter of a brave soldier and the descendant of a long line of gallant gentlemen. Those slow weeks since Christmas that Constance crowded with gayety were bringing gradual healing. The heart under the fluffy frock she slipped on to−night was not so heavy as the one under the white gown worn that day when she stood by Win in the Manor library and watched the boat for St. Malo leave the harbor.

Frances and Edith were ready when she came for them, also prettily dressed in white.

Nice little English flappers, Constance remarked approvingly. Why, what is the matter with Frances?

I don't know what a flapper is, confessed Frances, sure however, that it could be nothing very dreadful.

Constance laughed and patted the brown cheek. Merely a jolly little English school girl with her hair down her back. Yours is tidily braided but Edith looks the typical flapper.

She took a hand of each and three abreast they went down to the hall where Colonel Lisle was standing in a soldierly attitude before the fire. He greeted them with charming courtesy, offered Fran his arm and conducted her to the dining−room.

Both girls were supremely happy, Edith quietly so, Frances fairly radiating enjoyment in the stately room with its fine old portraits and windows open to admit the sweet odors of myrtle and daffodils.

Don't think the Island winters are all as mild as this, the Colonel was saying as Yvonne removed the soup plates. I have seen both snow and hail in Jersey and sometimes we have extremely cold weather. But you were asking, Frances, why French is the official language here. The Channel Islands came to the English crown with William the Conqueror, and have always remained one of the crown properties. So while the islanders are English

they have French blood in their veins and each island has retained its peculiar historic customs, the official use of French being one. When Normandy was regained by France, the islands remained with England and though Jersey was frequently attacked and sometimes invaded by the French they never held more than a portion of it temporarily. Indeed, so much was a Norman or French invasion feared, that the islanders inserted in the Litany an additional petition: 'From the fury of the Normans, good Lord, deliver us!'

We have seen the tablet in the Royal Square, marking the spot where Major Pierson fell in the battle of Jersey, said Edith, who shared Win's liking for history.

Ah, in 1781. That was the last French invasion. Speaking of the Royal Square, the Colonel went on, there is a curious custom connected with the Royal Court there, that might interest you. Any person with a grievance relating to property has a right to come into a session of the court and call aloud upon Rollo the Dane. The Cohue Royale, the Court, *must* listen and *must* heed. That is a very ancient relic of Norman rule in the Island. Oh, no, it is seldom resorted to. One does not lightly call Prince Rollo to one's aid. That is the final appeal when all other justice fails.

Yvonne, who was waiting upon the table, reappeared from a brief absence with a beaming face.

It is Monsieur Max who arrives, she said confidentially to Constance.

Max! exclaimed Connie. Why, how nice! Sha'n't he come directly, Dad? Tell him not to dress, Yvonne.

By all means, tell him to come as he is, said the Colonel, his face lighting with pleasure at this news.

Pardon, m'sieur, said Yvonne. Monsieur Max already hastens to his room and says the dinner shall not delay, that he shall be fast, ver' queeck.

Max can be fast, said Constance smiling. Well, we will dawdle over our fish. I never thought of his coming, she went on, watching Yvonne as she deftly laid another place beside Frances. This must be one of the week−ends he promised. I wonder why he didn't warn us?

I suppose there was no time to do so, said the Colonel. Max knows he is welcome at any hour.

Max was queeck. The fish was only just finished when he came quietly into the room, dressed for dinner and looking not in the least as though he had recently stepped from a steamer. Edith and Frances watched eagerly. If they were still in deep ignorance concerning Miss Connie's Italian prince, this was surely their chance to discover how matters stood between their adored little lady and Mr. Max.

Disappointment awaited them, for nothing could have been more commonplace than the greeting exchanged. Even the fancy of fourteen years could not construe Constance's Hello, old boy! and Max's nonchalantly offered hand into the slightest foundation for a romance. So far as outward appearances went Max was much more affectionate towards the Colonel, who did not disguise his marked pleasure at seeing him.

With gay words for both girls, the newcomer slid into his seat. I'm as hungry as a hunter, Connie, he announced. Soup, Yvonne? Anything and everything that's going. Oh, it was rather a rough crossing, but it merely gave me an appetite. Where are the boys? Couldn't they come to this exclusive dinner? Or am I butting in myself?

You are, replied Constance mischievously, but for Dad's sake, we will forgive you. The boys are not here for the simple reason that they were not invited. Having fortified ourselves with strong meat, the girls and I are going to brave the Manor ghost to− night.

Darkness had fallen and with it a sense of the eerie over Fran. She was distinctly relieved to hear Max laugh at this announcement.

Do you really want to see the ghost? he asked, turning to her.

Crazy to, was Fran's prompt reply. I wouldn't dare stay alone in that room, but with Miss Connie and Edith, I sha'n't be afraid. Indeed, I want dreadfully to see the ghost.

You know yourself, Max, that it doesn't materialize every time it is invoked, began Constance.

I know it, said Max. I only wanted to ascertain how keen the spook−hunters are. I slept in that room once for two weeks when the house was full and became much attached to his ghost−ship.

So I told the girls, replied Constance with equal gravity.

Edith and Frances were looking at each other in puzzled bewilderment but Max suddenly changed the subject. His eye had fallen upon Grayfur, the big cat that had purred himself into the room in the shelter of Yvonne's skirts.

Hello, old chap! he said, snapping his fingers. Do you like cats, Frances?

No, confessed Frances. I love dogs. Edith is the one who likes pussies. She is always bringing stray kittens home.

For some reason this statement seemed to amuse Max. To the surprise of the girls, he and Constance exchanged a smile.

Ten o'clock struck before Edith and Frances found themselves, after a happy evening, again in the pretty guest−room.

Miss Connie, I am afraid you weren't ready to come up, said thoughtful Edith. Didn't you want to stop longer with your father and Mr. Max?

Max doesn't leave until Tuesday morning, Constance replied. Dad will love to have him all to himself for a good talk and smoke, and if Max has anything especial to say to me, there will be plenty of opportunities. I'm quite glad to come up.

When she came for them, the girls were ready and the little procession started, three kimonoed figures each bearing a lighted candle along the echoing halls to the haunted room above the library. Electricity had not trailed its illuminating coils above the first floor of the house so the big apartment looked spooky and shadowy enough, the candles placed on the mantel, quite lost in immense distances. Three white cots stood side by side in its centre.

First, we will fasten the door securely, said Constance, suiting the action to the word. Then we will take this electric torch and look about a bit.

Careful inspection showed the room undoubtedly tenantless, the handsome old−fashioned furniture offering no hiding−place for any intruder. Like the library below, its walls were of paneled oak, with three large portraits set into the wood−work. One, a Lisle of Queen Elizabeth's time, looked down benignly, attired in doublet and ruff.

Miss Connie, how shall we know what to look for or expect? asked Frances when the three were settled in their beds, lights out and the room illuminated only by the moon.

It wouldn't be wise to tell you, said Constance mysteriously. All I'll say is that it is nothing at all disturbing or frightful. The few people who have seen or heard anything never knew at the time that it was a ghost.

But you will tell us in the morning? asked Edith.

Yes, replied their hostess. I will tell you then, whether you see anything or not, and very likely you will not. But if you want to have the creeps and would truly enjoy them, I'll tell you something that really happened to me once in Italy.

Oh, do, do! begged both girls in unison. That would be simply perfect, added Edith, sitting up in bed, her fair hair floating about her shoulders and turning her more than ever into the likeness of an angel.

Some years ago, when I was about your age, began Constance slowly, Dad and Mother and I were traveling in southern Italy, and Max was with us. He was with us a great deal, you know. We stopped one night at an old hotel that had once been a monastery, though it was different from the usual monasteries because it was a place where sick monks came to be cured and to rest.

The location was wonderful, on a cliff overlooking the sea and though the place had been altered for the purposes of a hotel, it was still a good bit churchly. The partitions between the cells had been knocked out and additions built, but the hotel dining− room was the old refectory with stone walls and floor, and the wonderful garden was much as the monks left it. Such roses you never saw and such climbing vines and flowering trees. Oh, there's no place like Italy!

Constance stopped. The moonlight falling across her bed touched her face into almost unearthly beauty.

We had connecting rooms that night, she went on. Dad and Mother took the corner one with two beds. Next was a tiny room where I was to sleep and Max's was beyond mine. All were originally cells opening on a terrace, covered with roses and passion−flowers and looking down to the sea, which was shining with little silver ripples.

We'd had an especially happy day and I was so keyed up with enjoyment that I couldn't go to sleep right away, but lay looking out at the flowers and the waves. Mother went through to see that Max was all right and then came back to kiss me. She closed the door into his room, but left open the one from mine into hers.

I remember hearing Mother and Dad laugh a little about something and I suppose I went to sleep, because I woke very suddenly with a start, all awake in a minute.

Connie paused, this being the proper moment for a thrill. What do you think I saw? she asked impressively.

Oh, I can't imagine! gasped Frances, shivering in delighted anticipation. Do go on!

Have you chills down your spine! laughed Constance. In the moonlight right beside my bed, I saw a monk, dressed in white, the usual robe of the Dominicans. He had a wise, kind face, with a pleasant expression, and as I looked at him, he took my wrist very gently, and put his finger on my pulse.

Oh−h! said Edith, pulling the covers about her more tightly. Oh, Miss Connie, what did you do?

That frightened me, said Connie. Up to that time, I noticed only his pleasant, gentle look, but it seemed as though a bit of ice touched me and I gave a scream that brought Mother and Dad up standing. Of course, when they came hurrying in, nobody was visible. I made a big fuss, presumably because I wanted to be petted and coddled.

I told them about the monk and Dad at once thought that Max had been playing a joke on me. He stepped into Max's room, intending to be severe, but Max was sound asleep and besides, the door into his room squeaked so that he couldn't possibly have opened it without waking us all.

Then they said I had the nightmare. Perhaps I did, said Constance with a smile, but I can see yet the kindly face of that old monk. I didn't want to stay in my room, so Dad told me to go in with Mother and he'd take my bed. We all settled ourselves again.

I was asleep or nearly so, feeling so comfy and safe in my bed close to Mother's when suddenly she sat up straight and said 'Richard!' in such an odd, startled tone. I woke and heard poor Dad piling out of bed again to come into our room. Mother sat there looking very troubled and holding one wrist in the other hand. She didn't say anything more, neither of them did, but I knew perfectly well that the old monk had been feeling her pulse.

And what happened in the morning? demanded Frances breathlessly.

Nothing at all, said Constance cheerfully. In the morning everything was beautiful and lovely as in no other country but Italy. Mother and I merely agreed that we had an odd dream. We did not stay a second night, for we were on our way back to Rome.

Did you ever hear anything more about the monk? asked Edith.

Years after, said Connie dreamily, we met some Americans in Switzerland who told us of a similar experience in this hotel. Later, I learned that Dad found out at the time that the place was reputed to be haunted by an old monk physician who turns up at intervals and feels people's pulses, and is often seen pottering about the garden in broad daylight. Monks are such a common sight in Italy that the hotel guests stop and converse with him, thinking him a gardener and never suspecting that he is a ghost.

But the Manor ghost isn't like that? asked Edith, who wanted reassurance.

Not a bit, said Constance. As for that, there was nothing so very frightful or repellent about the monk. Don't you think we should go to sleep now and give his spookship his innings?

The girls agreed and silence fell over the big room with its three white beds. Outside the open casements a vine waved within Fran's line of vision, tapping gently against a window pane.

Presently a slight sound caught Fran's wakeful ear, as of steps on a somewhat unfamiliar stair where it was necessary to grope one's way. Touching Edith's shoulder, she sat up in bed. They had entered the haunted room by a door now locked, opening on a big stone staircase; these steps seemed upon muffled wood.

Next moment there came a sudden convulsive sneeze that sounded in her very ear. Frances gasped but Constance sat up laughing.

No fair! she exclaimed.

For a second there was absolute silence, then somebody laughed, extremely close at hand, though yet behind a partition. The laugh was followed by the soft sound of retreating footsteps.

What happened, Miss Connie? begged Edith.

No ghost, said their hostess merrily. I had forgotten. That was clever of Max.

Silence again followed for a period, succeeded by the sound of music in the garden below the windows, soft and very sweet.

Oh, is *that* the ghost? demanded Frances in great excitement.

Your mother will bless me for letting you stop awake all night, said Constance. She sat up, wrapped a white robe about her and stuck her feet into slippers. Upon the music came the sudden unearthly miaow of a cat.

The noise sounded directly in the room and all three girls jumped. Constance laughed again.

I might have known Max did not come into that passage for nothing, she sighed. Where's that electric torch?

Having turned on the flash−light, Connie approached the large oil painting set into one side of the gloomy room, its base about a foot above the floor. She touched a knob on its frame and the portrait became a door opening outward and revealing a narrow, dusty winding stair descending to the floor below. On its top step sat the big cat, just opening its mouth for another howl.

Come in, Grayfur, said Constance. Max brought you, didn't he? If he hadn't sneezed and given himself away, he'd have opened the door a crack and let you in.

Is it a secret stair? asked Frances, her eyes big with excitement. Where does it go? Wouldn't Roger be crazy over it?

We will let him go up it, answered Connie, swinging the portrait into place again. The passage comes out below in the library. Max thought he would provide one ghost anyway.

Putting the cat into the hall, she locked the door again and then stuck her pretty head from the window.

Max, she said severely, addressing the unseen musician, you are spoiling your fiddle and breaking your promise. You said you wouldn't be silly. Go to bed now like a good boy.

The fiddle responded with two ear−splitting squawks.

Stop it! commanded Constance. There goes a string and it serves you quite right. You'll have the bobbies coming to investigate if you don't leave off.

The unappreciated serenader appeared squelched by this threat, for complete silence followed.

Nothing more is at all likely to happen tonight, said Constance, coming back to bed. And I hope Max will go properly to his room. Now go to sleep, girlies, and in the morning, I'll tell you how the Manor ghost disports itself.

CHAPTER XVI. THE MANOR GHOST

In spite of a firm intention to remain awake, Frances soon fell into quiet slumber and knew nothing more until the next morning. February dawns in England are dark, but when she finally opened her eyes, the room was faintly lighted by the coming sun and her watch told her that it was after eight.

Edith still seemed asleep, but from the bed at the left, Connie smiled back at her. For some reason known only to herself, their gay little hostess had decreed that Frances should take the centre bed.

Awake? she whispered. How's Edith? Is she still off?

As though she heard her name, Edith stirred, turned over and finally rose on one elbow.

Did you sleep well? asked Constance. We needn't get up unless you like. When we are ready, Yvonne is to bring us breakfast in my sitting−room. We'll wash and put on boudoir caps and eat *en negligee*.

At this delightful programme both girls became wide awake in an instant.

And you will tell us about the ghost? asked Frances.

I will, replied Constance, sitting up and gathering her pretty kimono about her, a lovely white Japanese crepe embroidered in gold with fire−eating dragons of appalling size. One stretched across the front as she fastened the folds. The girls also rose and put on their dressing−gowns. Unlocking the door, Constance looked into the hall.

I'll just see that the coast is clear before the procession forms, she remarked. Daddy's rooms are down−stairs but Max's is on our way. I'm quite sure though that he and Dad are already out, for Dad likes to attend early service and Max has probably gone with him like a dutiful young man.

As the three started, Edith turned to glance searchingly around.

What are you looking for? asked Frances.

For the pussy, replied Edith, hurrying to overtake them. I thought there was one in the room.

Miss Connie put it out, said Frances, laughing. Wake up, Edith!

As Edith spoke, Constance stopped to look at her rather oddly, then went on quickly.

When you are ready, come to my sitting−room, she said on reaching their door. It is at the end of this hall.

When the girls appeared ten minutes later, Constance was yet invisible. In the sitting−room a table stood before a couch piled with pillows, and two cushioned chairs opened luxurious arms.

Isn't this the dearest room, said Frances appreciatively as she settled herself. I suppose this is Miss Connie's own especial place where no one comes without an invitation.

In some respects the room was very unlike the sanctum of the average girl. While not lacking in the daintiness bestowed by fresh flowers, gay chintz and white draperies, it contained a number of objects not often seen in a boudoir. On a teakwood stand in one corner, against the background of a valuable Oriental rug in shimmering greens and blues, sat a curious Indian idol. Constance's desk might once have been used by some Italian princess in the days of Dante, and above it hung a beautiful silver lamp that could well cause envy in the breast of Aladdin. Pictures and ornaments alike spoke of wanderings in distant lands and from their unusual individuality indicated a wide range of interest in their possessor.

The door into the adjoining bedroom opened and Constance came out attired in a lounging−robe that made both girls gasp with admiration.

Oh, Miss Connie, Frances exclaimed, what a beautiful kimono. And what color is it?

Guess, said Constance merrily. For a long time I didn't know myself what to call it.

It isn't blue nor gray, said Edith admiringly.

Nor green nor violet, added Frances reflectively, and yet it is all of them. I've seen something like it but I can't think what.

I suppose only an Oriental artist could conceive such a combination, said Constance, ringing the bell for Yvonne and then curling into a little heap on the couch. Dad brought it to me from Paris and I keep it for very special occasions. I couldn't make out what color it was but I loved it the minute I opened the box and I knew you girls would. I've thought very seriously of having it made into an evening coat, for it is too lovely to be used only in my room. But about its color. One day this Christmas vacation I was feeling a bit poorly, so I had tea up here and let Dad and Max come. I slipped on this robe to receive them in state and the minute Max saw it, he told me what it was like. The thing is in plain sight.

The girls glanced about the room. Edith's eyes lingered for a second on a brass bowl full of blue hyacinths, but passed on.

I have it! exclaimed Frances, noticing a slight inclination of Connie's fair head toward the open casement. It's the color of the ocean!

Right! said Constance. The moment Max said so, I knew it. He did it very prettily, too, with some remark about the 'lady from the sea.' The silk really does change and shade as the water under storm and sun.

There came a tap and Yvonne, bearing a most tempting tray, entered with a smiling *Bon jour, mes demoiselles.* Fruit, a fat little chocolate pot sending forth a delicious odor, and flanked by delicate china and shining silver, whipped cream, marshmallows, French rolls, sweet unsalted butter and raspberry jam, made the girls feel hungry at the mere sight. Dainty green and white snowdrops, tucked here and there by Yvonne's artistic fingers added the final touch.

I think this is the greatest fun, said Frances. Do you always have your breakfast this way?

Bless you, no, replied Constance. This is an occasional Sunday morning indulgence. Every other day of the week, I am up, dressed and in my right mind to breakfast with my Dad. He'd think the world was coming down about his ears if his Connie wasn't there to pour his coffee. I warned him that we were going to have a debauch this morning and he won't care anyway, because he has Max. What did you mean, Edith, about a cat? Did you dream of Grayfur?

Why, no, it wasn't Grayfur, said Edith, dropping a marshmallow into her chocolate and watching it dissolve. I thought Mr. Max succeeded in carrying out his joke. He must have come back much later and put another pussy in from behind the portrait. I woke some time in the night, oh, hours after, because the moonlight was 'way across the room, and sitting in it, washing its face, was the prettiest little half−grown kitten. It was a perfect beauty, white with a plumy tail. I spoke to it very softly so as not to wake either of you, and it looked at me and purred but would not come. I watched it chase its tail for a little and then it jumped in a big chair and curled itself up to sleep. I suppose it must have gone out when the door was opened this morning. May we see it again, Miss Connie? It was much prettier than Grayfur. But do tell us now about the ghost. We are in such a hurry to hear.

You know practically all there is to know, said Constance whimsically.

Both girls stared at her. What do you mean! asked Edith. Is it a joke? Isn't there any ghost?

You know better than I do, replied Constance, tasting her chocolate critically. Did you have sugar, Frances? Why, you've seen the ghost, Edith, which is more than I can say.

Edith's face was a picture of surprise. *Seen* it! she repeated. Why, I saw nothing at all.

I told you, didn't I, that the people who saw the ghost never knew it at the time? This is the legend. About a century ago, the Richard Lisle, then owner of the Manor, married a very charming young wife. He was madly in love with her and was inclined to be rather jealous. The story runs that he couldn't bear to have her lavish affection on anything but him, was jealous of her dog and her horse and even of her flower−garden. Winifred Lisle had a very pretty white Persian kitten

Constance stopped, for Edith's spoon fell with a clatter. You don't mean that darling purry little pussy was the *ghost!* she exclaimed.

Listen to the story, Constance went on smiling. Dick Lisle objected to even this wee kit since it took some of his Winifred's time and attention and he gave orders that it was never to be admitted to the room where they spent the evening, presumably the library. The kitten disappeared and Winifred mourned for it. Months later, its little corpse was found on the secret stairs behind the portrait.

Then Mr. Max didn't put a cat into the room? asked Frances eagerly.

I think not, unless he took the trouble to bring a white kitten with him from Paris. Max is quite capable of doing it for a joke, but he could not know, you see, that we were planning to sleep in that room last night. And there is no white kitten about the Manor.

Isn't that the oddest story! said Edith in deep interest. Why, Miss Connie, I'm as sure as I am of anything that I saw that pussy playing in the moonlight. It was the sweetest little thing and I did wish it would come and cuddle by me in bed. Is it really a ghost? How do you account for it?

I don't account for it, said Constance. You can consider it a pretty dream if you wish. I never saw it and I have a fancy that it is because I am not fond of cats. When Frances said she did not like them, I knew that she would not see the little ghost kit either, and so I wanted you to take the bed nearest the moonlight.

That's the most interesting thing that ever happened to me, said Edith. I'm so glad I saw it.

Whether it is imagination or dream, I rather like to think of the kitten ghost playing so gayly with its tail on moonlight nights, said Connie. No, only three or four people have seen it. The room is not often used, and like Edith, they supposed it a kitten that had somehow got in. Well, is the Manor ghost satisfactory?

I think it's the dearest thing I ever heard of, said Edith happily. But do you suppose that Winifred's husband shut it in there deliberately?

We'll give him the benefit of the doubt. Cats are always poking about in odd places. The door in the library may have been open a crack and the kit gone in to investigate. Once I accidentally shut a kitten into a drawer in the linen closet. Luckily Paget happened to open it within an hour and she was surprised enough to find a pussy there. Now for the rest of the morning. I heard Frances say that she wanted to hear a church service in French just to see whether she could follow. If you like, I'll get Max to take us into town and we will find a French church to attend.

That would be lovely, declared Fran enthusiastically. I really believe I could understand quite a little now.

Thank you, Miss Connie, said Edith. I'm afraid I ought to go home. Fran can stay just as well as not, but Sister depends upon me to go to church with her. I always do, you know.

Edith colored and looked uncomfortable, feeling that perhaps she was being ungracious.

You're a good little sister, said Constance quickly. And you would not care so much as Frances because you have always spoken French. I imagine Dad will go to St. Aubin's and he'll take you home. I'll make Max go with us.

Max was perfectly willing to play escort, but looked dubious when Constance declared her intention of stopping at a tiny French church just inside the town of St. Helier's. Have you ever been here? he demanded.

No, admitted Constance. Of course we might go to the Convent of St. Andre. I forgot, though, they wouldn't let you in. Frances only wants to hear a sermon in French and this will answer very well.

Max still looked disapproving. You won't like it, he said. It's a queer, non−conformist sect of some kind. There's a place the other side of town where they have the Church of England service in French. Let's go there.

Why not stop here? persisted Constance. More exciting when one doesn't know what's coming next.

One may get more than one bargains for, commented Max. Connie, I have a premonition that we'll land in some mess.

Connie made a delightful little face. Come in, she said to Frances. I was under the impression that we invited Max to escort *us*.

When Frances returned home from church, she was distressed to find Win in bed.

He overdid yesterday, said Mrs. Thayne in reply to her anxious questioning. I can't discover exactly what happened, but he and Roger were out together and Win walked too far. That's all he will admit. No, he isn't as badly off as sometimes, and says he only needs a rest. Come up in his room, Fran, to tell your adventures.

To Fran's eyes Win looked decidedly ill when she saw him lying against his pillows, but he evaded all inquiries and demanded to know about the Manor ghost.

That wasn't the end of our experiences, Frances went on laughing, when the events of the night had been thoroughly discussed. We had a funny time in that little church. Mr. Max didn't want to go there in the beginning, but Miss Connie insisted. Inside, it didn't look much like a church for it was a great bare room, with not many people present. The usher made us sit rather far front, so we had a good view of the minister, who was a little man with black hair that stood straight up, and his manner was very excited.

The service seemed unusual for different people kept getting up and talking. I couldn't understand much and Mr. Max looked annoyed and Miss Connie amused. Finally a boy about my age began to speak. He wore the oddest vest and trousers of rose−pink sateen plaided with purple. We could see distinctly because the minister made him come out in front and face the people. Well, the clothes he had on were enough to make any one smile, but when he finished speaking, the minister bounced out of the pulpit and kissed him on both cheeks! He did, honest! Fran insisted in answer to Roger's whistle of incredulity.

I don't know what would have happened next, for the service was really very strange, but when the minister kissed that boy, Mr. Max gave a little grunt and took up his hat. I was sitting between them, and he leaned forward and said in such a disgusted tone, 'My word, Connie, *will* you come?'

I think Miss Connie was trying not to laugh but I guess she'd had enough herself for she rose and we went out very quietly so as not to disturb anybody.

When we reached the street, Frances went on, Mr. Max was so funny. He didn't say a word, only stalked along looking quite cross. Miss Connie sat down on a wall and laughed till she cried. Then she told Mr. Max to smile and show his dimple. But he wouldn't. I don't see how he could help it when she was so pretty and sweet. Well, after she laughed some more, she begged him please to look affectionate.

At that he couldn't help smiling, and then he asked Miss Connie if she was ever going to stop getting herself and him into scrapes. She called him 'old boy' and said she was sorry, she wasn't really, Fran interpolated with a wise nod, and promised to stick to the Church of England service ever after. Mr. Max inquired how much I understood and when I told him only a little, he said it was lucky. That was certainly a very peculiar church, Frances ended reflectively. I'm quite sure that Mr. Max wanted to come out long before we did, and that Miss Connie persisted in staying just to tease him.

Win was smiling over his sister's story, but though he evinced interest both in the Manor ghost and in the amusing experience Connie had furnished with her little French church, the point that most impressed him was Max's presence at the Manor.

I wish I could see him, he observed. I want so much to ask a question or two. Did Miss Connie tell him about the paper I found and how we explored the vaults and sounded the walls?

She did, assented Frances. We talked about it after dinner. Mr. Max was as interested as could be and said he was going down himself to take a look.

Mother, said Win suddenly. I really need to see him. Don't you believe he'd come in for a minute if he knew I was used up so I couldn't get to the Manor?

Indeed, I do, assented Mrs. Thayne. Write a note, dear. Roger shall take it for you.

Roger, who for some reason haunted his brother's room in a subdued mood not at all common to his usual attitude toward life, was very willing to act as messenger. Toward night, Max appeared at Rose Villa.

CHAPTER XVII. THE DOTTED LINE

Sorry you are laid by, old man, Max said cheerfully as he was shown into Win's room. Better luck soon.

It's good of you to come, replied Win, grasping the hand so cordially offered and relieved to see that the pleasant young face bore no expression of the sympathetic pity Win so often read in older countenances.

Well, my being here is as much of a surprise to me as to any one, said Max, sitting down by the bed. On Friday I expected to spend my Sunday in Paris. But it chanced that I successfully engineered a rather ticklish job for the Embassy, and the Chief was pleased. As a figurative pat upon the head he gave me the week−end off. You should have seen the way my car went to Granville! Jean drove till we were clear of Paris and then I took the wheel and things began to hum. From the tail of my eye I could see Jean devoutly crossing himself whenever we hit the earth, but we made the boat and didn't so much as run down a hen. I did wonder that we weren't held up anywhere for exceeding the speed limit, but the mystery was explained when we reached the Granville pier.

Max stopped with a mischievous laugh. The Embassy has several official machines, he explained, and of course they are so marked they are easily recognizable. I always use my own car, and am authorized to sport the Embassy insignia when on official business. I forgot to remove it before starting and that was why not a single gendarme did more than salute as we tore past. Good joke, so long as it ended well, but if we'd come a cropper on the way, there'd have been rather a row and Max would have stood for an official wigging, to say the least. Lucky

for us that nothing went wrong. What's done you up, old fellow?

Win looked at him wistfully. Just exploring the Manor cave, he said with a sigh. I did so want to see it, and I made Roger take me. I managed to get down all right, but it took over an hour to climb the cliff. The kid is wild because he thinks he's half− killed me.

Oh, say, that's a shame, said Max. I wish I'd known that you wanted to go. Pierre and I could have rigged a rope somehow and helped you get back.

Win's face just then was pitiful. Max's eyes grew very gentle but he did not utter one word of sympathy. I've been led a lively pace since I reached the Manor, he went on. Between Connie's ghost hunt and the extraordinary church she chose to attend this morning and your discovery in the library, my existence hasn't lacked variety. Gay Paris is quiet beside this! But there's nothing in the world I'm so keen on as hidden treasure. I'm pretty sure I have a special talent for hunting it down. To be sure the only time I ever tried, I made a giddy ass of myself and got into a jolly mess, but I wonder will I succeed with this. Connie thinks you've the tail of an idea. Can't you put me on?

That was what I wanted to see you for, replied Win, his self−possession quite restored. Please open the lower drawer of that desk. Right on top is a roll of tracing paper.

Why, this is a copy of the Manor plans, said Max, as he spread out the thin sheet.

Yes, said Win. Colonel Lisle let me trace them. Tell me, does anything about them strike you as odd?

Max considered the plan carefully. I can't say it does, he admitted after a minute survey. Give me a lead.

That dotted line, said Win, pointing to it with Max's pencil, according to Colonel Lisle, marks the path down to the cottages on the shore, only the path curves more now than it did when the plan was first made. Don't you think it strange that it was the *only* path put on the plans? Even the state driveway isn't indicated.

That, I suppose, wasn't made then.

But surely, persisted Win, there was some driveway to the main road. Why should this especial path be marked? It couldn't have been the most important, even at that time.

That does seem true, replied Max thoughtfully.

[Illustration: WIN'S PLAN OF THE MANOR CELLARS.]

Now look at the point where the dotted line comes to the house, Win went on, tracing its course as he spoke. This is the very oldest vault of all, under the library, you know. On the plan, its northern wall is continued flush by the northern side of the addition made later, and this dotted line runs parallel to it, but it runs *inside* the foundations.

So it does, Max agreed. But isn't that due to clumsy drawing? There's an axiom, you know, about it being impossible for two bodies to occupy the same space. Two lines couldn't occupy the same location on a plan.

Yes, said Win, but if this is a *path*, what is it doing *inside* the house?

There followed a second of silence and then Max gave a low whistle. I'm on, he announced. Clever reasoning, Win.

There's another thing, too, said Win, lying flushed and pleased against his pillows. I spent a lot of time on that dividing partition wall. I'm sure there is no space in it unless it is so thick that even a hollow place wouldn't sound any different. But after I looked again at the plans, I saw that what I should have put my time on wasn't that wall at all, but the northern one, indicated here as parallel to the dotted line. Mr. Max, I'm quite certain that the old original cellar extends farther to the north than this newer part. I mean that the north wall of the new cellar isn't on a line with the old one, not in reality, though here it is intended to look so.

You mean, said Max, bringing intelligent brows to bear on this explanation, that this was an underground passage rather than a surface path and that its northern side is the one flush with the original cellar?

That's exactly it, said Win. I think there is a passage running along outside that northern wall down to the cave and the beach. There seems a space on the plan that isn't accounted for in any other way, and that explains why this dotted line runs inside the foundations.

But, old chap, said Max kindly, I know that cave from top to bottom. Truly there is no exit. I've spent hours in exploring the place.

But when I was on the ledge at the back, there was a draught of fresh warm air from somewhere, Win pleaded. And Roger said he noticed it when you took him there. Behind the ledge is a big pile of stones and rubble. Couldn't that air get in somehow?

It must, since you felt it, agreed Max sensibly. If I can possibly manage it, I'll make an investigation. But I am booked to sail on Tuesday morning. It may have to stand over until the Easter holidays. I will take a squint at the cellar though this very evening. Did you sound that north wall?

No, I didn't, Win admitted. I spent all my time on the west one. Not until I studied the plans again, did it fully dawn on me that perhaps that line was a passage instead of a path. If that is true, it is the other wall that will bear investigation.

Max still surveyed the plans, his fine young face intent on this problem. He glanced up to meet a very wistful look from Win.

On the whole, let's wait until Easter, he suggested. Then you'll be feeling more fit and can come down in the vaults with me.

I wish you'd inspect that wall, Win replied. If you find it does sound hollow, will Colonel Lisle let us punch a hole?

Sure, said Max encouragingly. I know jolly well he will. Uncle Dick will be game for any investigation. Only he'll have to be convinced that I'm not pulling his leg. If that north wall resounds like a tomb, I'll tow Uncle down to hark for himself. Why, man, we're getting on swimmingly! That was a mighty clever idea of yours about the dotted line. Connie'll be keen on it too, and anyway she owes me one after getting me into such a beastly mess as she did to−day. I didn't even use unkind language about it either. If the sea is decent tomorrow, I'll trot her down to the cave to see where your fresh air comes from.

Perhaps it can be felt only when the wind is from a certain direction, observed Win.

That's more than likely. Yesterday it was south, wasn't it? Very probably it takes a south wind to strike in there. I'm afraid we can't hope for that to−morrow because there seems a storm brewing, on purpose probably to give me a rough trip on Tuesday.

Weren't you glad of the chance to come? asked Win.

I was, said Max expressively, not only because I always like to get back to the Manor, but because I was pleased with myself to think I'd scored with this especial bit of work, a job of smoothing down an elderly ass who was inclined to be a trifle footy. You see when I decided to go in for the diplomatic service, Dad told me that he would use his influence only to get me an appointment, a try−out. After that it was up to me; if I received promotion it would be because I earned it, not because I was his son. He makes me an allowance because one really couldn't manage on the salary of an attache, but so far as my profession goes, I stand absolutely on my own merits. So Max is feeling proud of himself just now! he added whimsically. So's my Dad, if my telegram reached him.

He must be proud of you, said Win rather soberly. I so much hope that Roger will condescend to go to Annapolis. You see I can't, and Dad would like one of us in the navy.

Roger will wake up to a sense of his privileges some day, said Max. Do you know, Win, some of the finest work in the world has been done by the fellows who were handicapped. Prescott, for instance, writing all his histories, blind in one eye and sometimes half crazed by pain; Milton, too, dictating to his daughters, and Scott, producing so much when he was old and burdened with grief and trouble. And Stevenson, who was ill half his life.

But they were geniuses, said Win.

They were also too courageous in spirit to yield to circumstances. To come down to more ordinary people, I think Uncle Dick is mighty fine. He is crippled, useless for the work he expected to grow old in; he saw his only son die for England. You have seen enough of him to know what he is and what he means not only to Laurel Manor but to the Island. I respect and admire him tremendously and I shall owe much of whatever success I score, to him as well as to Dad. There are careers open to you, Win. You are clever and have a fine mind. Roger defers to your opinion. Through your influence, he may accomplish far more than he might alone.

I don't amount to very much with Roger. Still, I did make him square things with Fisher that day he played truant and went off with you, admitted Win with the ghost of a smile. Mother only lectured him for bunking, but I persuaded him to apologize and to put in the next Wednesday doing the work he skipped.

Good for you! said Max cordially. His gray eyes were very kind and friendly as he rose to leave.

I hope you'll feel more fit to−morrow, he said, shaking hands. If I possibly can, I'll run in and make a report; if not, I'll drop a line when I get home to the lurid lights of Paris.

Shall you drive back with the Embassy insignia on your car? inquired Win smiling. He looked much brighter and happier than before his visitor came.

Max laughed. I fancy not, he said as he gathered hat, gloves and riding−crop. I'm rather anxious to be on my good behavior. No, I'll let Jean drive which will be prudently slow, and I'll meditate about your hidden chest and the dotted path and other things back at the Manor.

I believe Mr. Hamilton did you more good than the doctor, declared Mrs. Thayne, entering Win's room after his caller had mounted Saracen and ridden away. You look fifty per cent brighter.

He's a crackerjack, said Win briefly. He's promised to do some investigating on his own account and I feel sure that he can induce Colonel Lisle to let us try an experiment if it is needed. But, Mother, there's something I've been meaning to tell you all day, not about the Spanish chest or anything to do with it. You know we spoke once

of how Miss Estelle reminded us of some one at home. This morning instead of sending a servant with my breakfast, she brought it herself, and when she was arranging things, I remembered whom it is she looks like. It is your friend, Mrs. Aldrich.

Win, you're right, said Mrs. Thayne suddenly. Estelle *is* like Carrie Aldrich, and not in looks alone, but in manner. Now how can that possibly be? Of course it is only a chance resemblance but it must exist since you notice it, too. I wonder whether Fran ever carried out her intention of asking Edith whether they had any relatives in the United States. She spoke of doing so.

What good would that do, if Mrs. Aldrich is the person Estelle resembles? asked Win. Haven't you known her all her life?

I met her at school, replied his mother, when we both were young girls and then knew her intimately. Of later years, we have seen less of each other, though we have always kept up the friendship. There seems no possible connection between Carrie Aldrich and Estelle and the likeness must be only in our minds. They say, you know, that every person in the world has a double somewhere.

I'd like mighty well to be Mr. Max's double if I could only choose, muttered Win to himself.

CHAPTER XVIII. ROGER THE MAROONED

No word came from the Manor the next day, only a big bunch of fragrant lilies for Win and some jelly of which Paget alone knew the secret recipe. Early Tuesday morning Max's prophesied storm arrived in earnest and the young people at Rose Villa saw the Granville boat leave her pier amid sheets of driving rain. Her decks looked dreary and deserted, for all the passengers were inside.

I suppose Mr. Max is on board for he was obliged to go, observed Frances, as the steamer disappeared in low−hanging banks of fog drifting continually nearer shore.

Yes, agreed Win, who was dressed and about, though still looking ill. There will be some word when he gets back to Paris. It stormed so yesterday that he probably couldn't go into the cave as he planned.

Life seems very tame after all the interesting things that happened last week, sighed Frances, gathering her French grammar and other school books. Rain or no rain, there will be school, and English rain seems somehow *wetter* than American. You'd better eat that jelly, Win. According to Nurse, it is the elixir of life and warranted to cure every ill known to man.

Win smiled as he watched his sister and Edith down the steps, and waved a listless hand as they turned inquiring faces under bobbing umbrellas at the end of the terrace. He looked enviously after Roger, a tall slim clothespin in black rubber coat and boots, sou'wester pulled firmly over his head, tramping sturdily toward the beach, evidently on some definite errand. Win would have liked mightily to be swinging along with him through the storm, but the fun of facing a tempest was not for Win.

For a few moments he stood idly by the window, wondering whether Connie knew what Max had possibly discovered in his inspection of cave and vaults. Then he turned with a sigh, reminding himself that with the weather what it was, and in this land of few telephones, there was no chance of hearing anything from the Manor.

Gradually the stormy morning passed, somewhat dully for Win, who still felt unfit to study or even to occupy himself with a book, and lay upon the couch while his mother read aloud.

Frances returned from school, ravenously hungry and quite rosy with the rain that had beaten in her face.

Mother, I am nearly starved! she announced.

Why, it is time for luncheon, said Mrs. Thayne, awakening to a realization of that fact. But where is Roger? He can't have taken the whole morning just to deliver that message for Estelle.

He could easily, Mother, said Win. Why, if I had a chance to get out in this storm, I feel sure it would take me forever to do the simplest errand. He'll come home when he's hungry.

The gong for luncheon sounded and the three sat down to Annette's delicious scallops, daintily creamed in their own big shells, her French bread and perfect chocolate. Still Roger did not come.

Nurse took the plates, and brought dessert; fruit, clotted cream with plum jam, and a special glass of egg−nog for Win.

Shall we put Mr. Roger's lunch to the fire? she asked of Mrs. Thayne.

I don't see why he doesn't come. He can't have gone to the Manor and if he had, they would have sent word if he were staying. No, you needn't keep it warm, Nurse. Unless he has some very good excuse when he comes, he may lunch upon bread and milk. It's really very naughty of him to go off like this when he had lessons to learn.

It's queer where he can be, observed Fran. He started on his errand just after Edith and I came out and saw Annette buying scallops of the fish−woman. He's crazy about them you know, and he asked particularly if they were for luncheon, and told her to be sure to get plenty.

Oh, I don't suppose anything has happened, said Mrs. Thayne quietly, for she did not wish Win to worry.

When Roger was still missing half an hour later, Mrs. Thayne sought Estelle.

Whatever can have happened? said Estelle helplessly. I can't think. Did he have any money?

Why, perhaps a few pence, not much anyway, replied Mrs. Thayne. You think he went into St. Helier's and had to walk back? That's possible. Fran, it's not storming so hard now. Put on your rain− coat and run out to the end of the terrace. Perhaps with the field−glasses you can make out whether he is coming down the beach or is anywhere in sight.

Frances returned with the report that there was practically no beach, owing to the high tide, and no foot−farers on the narrow strip that was visible in the fog.

Neither Estelle nor Mrs. Thayne knew what was best to do. Estelle suggested the police and then the rector, but neither seemed to Mrs. Thayne likely to offer a solution.

We will wait a while, she said with an anxious glance at the clock just striking two. Don't do or say anything to let Win think I am worried, Fran. Let me take your coat. I'll go down to the beach myself. I really think that Roger should be punished for causing us such anxiety.

Had his mother only known, Roger was already enduring considerable self−inflicted penance for getting into a predicament which made it impossible for him to return.

Delivering Estelle's message at a cottage by the shore had taken but a few moments and with most of the morning before him, Roger set out along the beach, glorying in the force of wind and rain. True, there were lessons to be prepared for Bill Fish, who would come cheerfully swimming in at the appointed hour, but there was surely time for a stroll toward Noirmont Point.

The tide was far out and wet hard sand stretched in every direction, very pleasing to stamp over, and retaining little trace of any footprint. Only gray gulls and drifting fog banks distinguished the immediate surroundings.

As Roger tramped on, he noticed that the fog grew steadily thicker and that his path included occasional seaweed−covered rocks, but not until a black mass loomed up before him, did he realize that he had left the true beach and was walking straight out to sea. The bulk he had encountered was not the martello tower on Noirmont Point but the old castle of St. Aubin's, at high tide an island in the bay.

No thought of any danger in his position struck Roger. He had always intended to investigate that island but somehow had never yet done so. Here it lay before him.

Climbing the rocks upon which the castle stands, he made a careful survey of its outside and finally gained access to the interior, much disappointed to find nothing at all remarkable, though St. Aubin's castle is not wholly a ruin and was once rented and occupied for a season by an eccentric Englishman.

Nothing was now visible save swirling fog and for the first time, Roger realized what that fog meant. He hastily made his way to the little beach, where the tide, still out, would permit him to cross to the mainland. To start in the right direction was simple enough, for he very well knew which side of the castle faced the shore, but he had taken scarcely twenty steps down the sand when he saw that he had no certainty of keeping his bearings once the island was left behind.

Roger was only twelve, but he was possessed of common−sense and self−reliance. Though the youngest of the family he had been so thoroughly impressed with the necessity of considering safety first" in regard to Win, that in an emergency of any kind he was usually level−headed. He stopped where he was, searching his pockets for the compass Captain Thayne had given to each of his three children.

Roger's pockets yielded a strange and varied assortment of objects, presumably of value, but no compass. He looked irresolutely behind where the castle was just visible as a darker spot in the fog. Nothing at all could be distinguished ahead.

From the lighthouse on the point came the tolling of a bell, but its warning tones were so scattered and disguised by the fog, that its sound was of no use as a guide.

For several moments Roger stood where he was. The distance to shore was not great if he was only certain of going straight ahead. To swerve from that direction meant wandering out to meet the cruel Jersey tide, presently coming in like a hunter on its prey. To remain where he was meant anxious hours for his mother and for Win, about whom Roger was already so much concerned.

Having weighed the alternatives, he took five steps forward and stood absolutely surrounded by the whirling mist. A sort of horror came over him, a keen realization of his helplessness before one of the great elemental forces of nature. The risk was too great! There was a chance that he might keep in the right direction with nothing to guide him, but it was only a chance. Worried as his mother would doubtless be, better that she endure a few hours of anxiety than lasting grief.

Turning squarely about, Roger retraced his footsteps, already faint, to the castle, where he perched forlornly on a high rock. A little later, he heard for he could not see, the low hiss and gurgle of the coming tide. Roger was a big,

strong, brave boy, but at the sound, he could not suppress a few tears, and they were not wholly for his own plight.

Mrs. Thayne returned from her fruitless expedition to the beach, looking still more distressed.

I can't imagine where Roger is, she said anxiously to Frances. Of course, there may be some good excuse for this performance, but I don't see what it can be. He knows that he is not to go into town without permission and it seems as though he would have come home for luncheon unless he was in St. Helier's. If he really has been disobedient and played truant again into the bargain, I shall ask Mr. Fisher to punish him.

Oh, Mother, said Frances, Roger wouldn't deliberately frighten us, especially when he's been so upset over Win.

But where *is* he? said Mrs. Thayne again. Thank goodness! Here's Mr. Fisher.

She hurried down to intercept the tutor at the door. Lingering at the head of the stair, Frances heard her name called from Win's room.

Is Mother dreadfully troubled? he asked as she entered. I think Roger went back to the cave and has been shut in.

Oh, I hope not, said Frances. Mother's annoyed but it seems to me he must be all right. When he gets ready he will turn up with some wonderful tale of adventure.

I suspect he's in some scrape, said Win. Might not be such a bad idea to appeal to the police after all. I only wish I wasn't such a helpless stick, he added rather bitterly.

Mr. Fisher has gone down to the beach, reported Frances from the window. I'm glad he's come, for Mother will feel better to have him to consult.

Both were silent for a moment, thinking of Roger, blunt, loyal, impulsive Roger, hoping that nothing serious had befallen him.

Presently Mrs. Thayne came, her face expressing a calm she did not feel. Mr. Fisher thinks there is no cause for us to worry, she remarked placidly. He is going to take what he calls a 'turn about the town.' Frances, suppose you go on reading to Win while I sew a little.

Frances took the book Win held out to her, and Mrs. Thayne's fingers twitched the needle through her embroidery, both ears alert for sound of returning steps. The clock struck three and then four. Nothing happened. Roger did not come and Mr. Fisher did not reappear.

Over on St. Aubin's tiny island, Roger watched the water creep steadily up the rocks, up and up until it broke almost at the foundations of the castle. Cruel, cold, and gray it looked and hungry and chilly was the boy who watched. Once a gull flew so close that he could almost touch it as it vanished like a ghost into the fog.

At intervals Roger inspected his watch, counting the moments till the tide should cease to make. At last the water stopped climbing the rocks, remained stationary, fell an inch. The next wave broke still farther below.

But unless the fog should lift, ebb tide would only duplicate Roger's predicament of the morning. Toward four he saw that the mist was gradually growing lighter; saw water visible fifty feet from the island. Presently a breeze sprang into being, the most welcome wind Roger had ever known. Before it the fog thinned, grew filmy,

dispersed in shreds of trailing vapor. Noirmont Point and St. Aubin's village came gradually into distinct view, and with them a man walking along the sand.

Water ten feet deep and many wide still barred Roger from the shore and he could not make himself heard above the slow heave of the rollers lazily breaking on the beach. Was there no way to attract the saunterer's attention?

Finding a long branch, relic of some storm−wrecked tree, Roger tied his handkerchief to it and waved vigorously. After a time, the man on the beach noticed the flag and stood looking toward it.

A bright idea struck Roger. At home he had belonged to a troop of boy scouts and knew the signals. He would experiment on this stranger.

Just by chance, Mr. Fisher at one time had been a scout−master and instantly realized that Roger, marooned on St. Aubin's island, was trying to send a message. Hastily improvising a flag, he responded.

Twenty minutes later, Mrs. Thayne, still nervously sewing, heard Mr. Fisher run up the steps and Estelle hurry to the door. A few brief seconds sufficed to give the explanation Roger had so painstakingly signaled.

I didn't stop to rescue him, Mrs. Thayne, explained Mr. Fisher, because his one thought was for you and Win, not to let you worry a moment longer.

Can't you get a boat and row out for him? asked Estelle, seeing that Mrs. Thayne was unable to speak. Poor dear boy, he must be cold and famished.

I'm off to Noirmont Point, replied Mr. Fisher briefly. It shouldn't take long to pull over and back, provided that I pick up a boat quickly.

In spite of the tutor's best efforts, darkness had fallen before the marooned prisoner was returned to his anxious family, who sat around to see him eat everything pressed upon him. Roger was pale and very subdued. Strangest of all, he had come up Noirmont Terrace pressed close to the side of the obnoxious Bill Fish and not in the least resenting the hand that rested on his shoulder.

Having consumed all the food in sight, he yielded without protest to his mother's desire that he should go to bed in order to ward off possible chill. When Mr. Fisher, heartily thanked, had taken his departure, Mrs. Thayne started for Roger's room. On its threshold she stopped for the boys were talking.

I hated it like time out there, said Roger, now reposing luxuriously in bed. But I hated worse to have you and Mother worried. I didn't purposely go over to the island, Win.

I know you didn't, said his brother. I was sure that something you couldn't help had happened.

It did, sighed Roger. I guess I'll never again do anything that worries Mother, now I know how it feels to worry over somebody myself. And I say, Win, Bill Fish is all right! To think of his knowing the scout signals! And he pulled out for me himself in a heavy old dory that weighed a ton. Why, Bill Fish isn't so bad!

And have you just found that out? asked Win laughing. I've known it all the time.

CHAPTER XIX. AT CORBIERE

Not until Friday did Win receive the longed−for letter from Paris. He tore it open eagerly.

DEAR WIN, it ran, I've just arrived in town and am wishing I was back in Jersey. As the steamer sailed, I looked over at St Aubin's and thought of you. You couldn't see me of course, both for fog and because I was in the wheel−house with the pilot, Jim Trott, a fellow from Gorey village.

Probably you thought that we didn't get into the cave on Monday on account of the weather. It was beastly, but I decided to try, and when Connie knew my plan, she insisted on going with me. Pierre came too, with a lantern and we went down without much trouble.

Pierre and I tackled your stone pile at once and we pitched quantities aside, but couldn't finish because Connie, who was watching the tide, called a halt too soon. But we cleared enough rocks away to feel rather sure there is an opening of some kind beyond; just possibly the passage you are so keen on, more probably connecting with another cave. The Jersey cliffs are honey−combed with them. How's that for exciting news?

Connie haled us out before there was really any need and of course the tide did not serve for us to go again. When I come at Easter, I'll finish the job if necessary. After playing ball with several tons of stone, we then explored the vaults, armed with a hammer and a long line.

Well, old fellow, I pounded that north wall inch by inch and I can't conscientiously say I struck anything that sounded at all hollow. But still, it's not like tapping on plaster or wood; one couldn't reasonably expect the same result for the stone is probably some feet thick. And if the whole wall is the side of the tunnel, naturally it would all sound alike, so that test doesn't really prove or disprove anything.

The discovery Connie and I did make, and to my mind it is rather important, is that you are right in thinking that there is a discrepancy between the walls of the oldest vault and the adjacent cellar. Outside the house, the foundation wall runs flush the length of the library and the wing beyond; inside, that same foundation wall doesn't jibe. According to our measurements, there is a difference of over a metre, almost four feet, in the length of the partition at right angles to the north wall as reckoned on either side. This certainly bears out your theory of a passage running along that wall.

We looked very carefully but could not detect that there had ever been any opening, but all the masonry is so rough that perhaps we couldn't expect to find it.

Uncle Dick is interested but sceptical, says the difference in measurement may be accounted for by walls built at different times. When he thinks it over a little, he will see that no Lisle in his senses, and the Lisles possess sense, would have put four extra feet of solidity into a wall which had no earthly reason to need such treatment. But he said that when I came at Easter, we may have a mason and knock a hole wherever we choose. Messing about in the cellar is a harmless amusement that may keep us out of mischief and provide employment for some deserving workman. Before that date, I trust you will succeed in getting Uncle Dick into a less doubting frame of mind. Easter is but a month away and if all goes well, I'll surely be back and we will hunt that Spanish chest to its lair.

Had no adventures coming here. Jean seemed relieved when I told him to drive. When I reached my rooms, I found a note directing me to report for duty to−morrow prepared to show some important American from the western States the sights of Paris. That means a gay and giddy day. I only hope I sha'n't have to interpret while he buys hats for Madam and the young ladies at home. Once I was let in for that and it was pretty sickening. I've often wondered what the ladies thought of those hats. I also hope he won't be keen on climbing the Eiffel tower, for that's one of the things that's not done in Paris.

I must go to bed for it is after two and my day to−morrow, or rather to−day, may include an evening as well.

Till Easter then adieu, and all best wishes,

M. R. HAMILTON.

This letter naturally afforded Win a great deal of satisfaction and his interest and pleasure were shared by the others. To wait a whole month to solve the mystery of the Spanish chest when so distinct a clue appeared already in his hand, was a trial of patience. Naturally Colonel Lisle would not be likely to go ahead in the matter until Max returned to inspire action by his youthful enthusiasm, and it was only fair that Max should be in at the finish. Win wondered whether Connie shared the Colonel's scepticism. This proved not the case, only that Connie and her father were going to London for a week or two and the little lady of the Manor had other ideas to occupy her pretty head.

We may even run over to Paris, she announced during a farewell call at Rose Villa. Max has been begging us ever since he was sent there, so it's possible we may cross for a few days and plan so that we come back together at Easter.

Wouldn't it be jolly to go around Paris with Mr. Max, said Win almost enviously. I haven't forgotten how dandy he was to me in Washington. Dad took me along when he was calling on some official and then found he was in for a morning's conference. The Secretary sent for a young man, who proved to be Mr. Max and told him to look after me. I was only fifteen, but Mr. Max took as much pains to give me a good time as though I'd been somebody really important.

That's like Max, said Connie briefly, her eyes showing pleasure at Win's tribute. I think he's detailed for service such as that more often than the other young men of the Embassy because he gets on so well with all sorts of people. It's a real gift and a very valuable one for a prospective diplomat. But you are celebrating one of your great national days this week, aren't you?

Yes, Washington's birthday, said Frances. Luckily it comes on Wednesday, so we have a holiday. We were going to have a picnic at Corbiere and invite you, Miss Connie.

Indeed, I wish I could be there, said Constance with genuine regret in her voice, but I'll be in London. We'll keep up our spirits by remembering that it's only a brief time to Easter and then we are to start again on the trail of the Spanish chest.

Estelle consented to join the holiday celebration, and when the twenty−second dawned bright and sunny, Rose Villa was the scene of an animated flurry. In the dining−room, Edith, Frances and Estelle were putting up the lunch, while Win collected painting traps for the picture he hoped to sketch, and Roger departed to bring the pony and cart engaged for the day.

Corbiere Point was distant about four miles and all except Win and his mother proposed to walk, since the little carriage could take lunch baskets and wraps.

Roger appeared with a plump stubborn Welsh pony, attached to a funny little cart which he gayly informed them was a gingle. Neither Edith nor Estelle, who were familiar with the term as used in Cornwall, thought it odd but Roger considered it most absurd.

Even the short legs of a tiny pony could cover the ground more rapidly than the walking party, and when the pedestrians reached their destination, no sign of Win, his mother, pony or gingle was visible.

Oh, what a wonderful view! exclaimed Estelle stopping short.

Before them lay Corbiere lighthouse, built on a bold rock, at flood tide an island, but at this hour approachable from the mainland by a causeway. In the foreground stretched an expanse of jagged red reefs and shining pools

with a single martello tower rising in dignified grandeur. At the right lay a hill, its summit crowned by one stone cottage with a thatched roof, and down the hill a narrow road wandered to disappear in a cleft between two gigantic red granite boulders sprinkled with glittering quartz and partly covered with gray and bright orange lichens. Green grass and turquoise blue sea with a single white sail dipping to the horizon completed the color scheme. Near at hand hovered several of the sea−crows, *corbieres*, which have given the point its name.

Estelle's soft eyes grew wide and a pretty pink flush came into her usually pale cheeks as she gazed into the distance. Roger and the girls were looking for the rest of the party.

The thatched cottage seemed utterly without life, windows blank and no sign of any domestic proceedings.

It must be deserted, said Edith as they strolled on.

Here's a shed with something black in it, said Roger. I can just see its head. It's a goat.

It's a black stocking hung to dry, declared Edith.

Stocking, nothing, replied Roger. I know it's a goat.

The two hung over the gate and deliberately stared into the little shed. No goat ever stopped still for so long, persisted Edith, when three full minutes had passed without motion in the shed.

I'll go in and see, began Roger, about to climb the gate. A sudden exclamation from Frances deterred him.

Goodness, here's a black cat! Where did it come from?

Upon the doorstep now sat a perfectly motionless black cat.

Look at the black hens! added Edith, bursting into laughter.

At either corner of the stone cottage two coal black hens were visible, also like statues, and possessing bright yellow eyes.

And a black dog in a barrel! Frances fairly shrieked.

Well, a dog has some sense! said Roger, whistling and calling. Strange to say, the dog neither stirred nor lifted its head. Nose on its paws it remained absolutely still.

This is a bum lot of animals, observed Roger. I never saw a dog before that wouldn't at least bark at strangers.

It's probably dumb as well as deaf, commented Frances.

But it might at least *move*, expostulated Roger. Perhaps it's paralyzed.

Perhaps this cottage and everything about it is enchanted, suggested Edith. Miss Connie said something, don't you remember, about a place where the Jersey witches hold their meetings?

That is 'way the other end of the island, retorted Roger, down at St. Clement's.

There was something uncanny about that collection of dusky, motionless animals and the three were conscious of real relief when the two hens at last walked off in quite a hen−like, not to say human manner. But cat, dog and goat remained as though petrified.

Mother's calling, said Frances. Come along, Roger. Lunch!

Roger postponed his intention of stirring up the dog to see whether it was stuffed or paralyzed, and they turned in the direction of the call.

Luncheon was already spread on the grass in shelter of a big rock, the Stars and Stripes forming the table decoration. At sight of the flag, Roger and Fran stopped and saluted gravely as their father had taught them.

Mother! exclaimed Roger, his eyes widening. Is that a chocolate layer−cake? Where did it come from?

I made it, said Mrs. Thayne. Miss Estelle said I might and Annette was quite pleased to watch me, and see how an American cake was constructed.

No doubt that the young people were frankly happy, though spending this holiday in so unusual a fashion. After luncheon, Win prepared to sketch the lighthouse and the other three proposed to visit it.

As they ran down the hill toward the causeway and the heap of picturesque red rocks bared by the water, Mrs. Thayne settled herself with her embroidery and Estelle produced her netting.

After a few moments spent consulting with Win as to the exact angle desirable for his sketch, Mrs. Thayne felt for her watch, remembered that she did not bring it and looked at Estelle.

Will you tell me the time? she asked. Win's hands are full with his palette and block.

Certainly, said Estelle. It's just two.

As she replaced her watch, a sudden look of interest crossed Mrs. Thayne's face.

What a curious chain you have, Estelle, she remarked. Is it an old one? May I take it a moment?

It belonged to my grandmother, my mother's mother, replied Estelle, unfastening the chain and holding it out to Mrs. Thayne. I think it is very old for I never saw another like it.

Mrs. Thayne examined the trinket carefully. It was hand−made, of pale yellow gold, and the links, instead of being round, were rectangular, yet so fastened in a series of three as to produce the effect of a round cable.

It is an awkward thing to use, said Estelle, because sometimes those links get turned and it is very difficult to work them into place.

Mrs. Thayne looked up, a curiously intent expression on her face. Estelle, she said abruptly, have you any relatives in America?

Not that I know of, Estelle replied, surprised by the sudden question, though I suppose it is quite possible. Grandmother's sister married a young man who went out to the colonies, somewhere near Toronto, I think. We have known nothing of them since Grandmother died and that was before I was born. I think Mother completely lost touch with Great−aunt Emma. It is easy, you know, when one belongs to a different generation and has never seen one's aunt.

Then you don't know whether your Great−aunt Emma had children? asked Mrs. Thayne, twisting the odd chain reflectively between her fingers.

Oh, yes, said Estelle. I do happen to know that. There were two, a girl and a boy. Now I think of it, I recall that the girl married and went to the States. I do not know how one speaks of your counties, but it was not the city of New York, perhaps New Yorkshire?

New York State, put in Win so abruptly that his mother jumped. To all appearances he had been completely absorbed in his painting.

But you don't know the name of the man she married? Mrs. Thayne asked.

I do not, replied Estelle. But I could find out, for it will be among Father's papers. I think he had a hazy idea of writing some time to Canada to get in touch if possible with Mother's relatives. But it was never done, and I should hesitate to do it, especially now.

Lest they might think you were seeking aid, Mrs. Thayne thought, with a tender appreciation of Estelle's proud independence, but she kept her inference to herself.

Do you know whether your grandmother's sister who went to Canada also possessed a chain like this? she asked.

Why, yes, said Estelle, laying down her work and looking out to sea. I know she did. Great−grandfather Avery once bought two just alike in Paris and gave one to each of his daughters. This came to me through Mother.

Mrs. Thayne started to speak but caught Win's eyes fixed upon her inquiringly. Something in their expression checked the words she was about to utter.

After all, better be sure, she thought. It is a very curious old trinket, Estelle, she said, returning the chain. Some time when you think of it, I wish you would look in your father's papers and find the married name of that cousin who went to New York State.

CHAPTER XX. WIN WONDERS

Mother, said Win solemnly, I shook in my shoes this afternoon. Didn't you notice the lurid mixture of colors I was daubing on my block? And all because I knew you were having psychic thoughts and I was so afraid you would say what I thought you were thinking and startle Estelle. I wanted so much to know myself just what you were driving at with your watch−chains that I almost chewed my tongue off trying not to speak.

I know it, said Mrs. Thayne. I felt you quaking, Win, and decided to keep still. After all, the only sensible way was to find out definitely that name. Estelle is so proud and so reluctant to accept help that one must move carefully in trying to smooth her pathway.

The two were alone in Mrs. Thayne's room after the happy picnic at Corbiere. Through the open window floated the occasional sound of voices from the end of the terrace where Roger, Edith, and Frances stood watching the steamer for Southampton round Noirmont Point.

And now that I do know the name, I am still uncertain what is best to do, reflected Mrs. Thayne. But you asked about the chain, Win. The moment I saw that one of Estelle's I knew that I had seen a similar one in the

United States. For a time I could not place it, and really it is a thing of unusual workmanship and not likely to be largely duplicated. Then it came to me in a flash that Carrie Aldrich often wears a chain like that and once told me that it had belonged to her mother.

But I never knew that Mrs. Aldrich was English, said Win wonderingly. I thought she'd always lived in Boston.

I knew that she was a Canadian, replied his mother, but she was educated in the United States and married an American. To trace her ancestry never occurred to me. She is so thoroughly and completely American that one would never think of her forefathers as being anything else.

I can hardly keep silent, she went on. When I think of Carrie alone in that huge house in Boston, with her big income and her still bigger heart and only her charities to fill it and to occupy her time, and then think of Estelle, so proudly trying to support herself and Edith in a land where self−support for women is not easy, why, Win, it seems as though I must tell her on the spot. And yet, if I do, I am quite sure Estelle will just shut herself up in the armor of her pride and refuse to make herself known. Taking both the testimony of the chains and the very pronounced family resemblance, there can be no reasonable doubt of the identity.

I think Estelle would refuse, said Win slowly. She's foolishly proud. She thinks, Mother, that you pay more than the house is worth and so she does her level best to make it up to us in other ways.

I believe I will write to Carrie, mused Mrs. Thayne. She'd be interested and anxious to see the girls. I'm sure she doesn't realize that she has any cousins in England.

Mother, said Win with deliberation, why don't you ask Mrs. Aldrich to come over and visit us for a little? You'd like to have her and so would we. Probably she has nothing especial to keep her at home and might be glad to be let out of a month or two of winter.

That's a bright idea, Win! exclaimed his mother. Only I suppose she has several pet charities that she will feel she can't leave at short notice.

In that case, replied Win, probably you'd better write her about the girls, only do tell her to come and see for herself. It strikes me that nothing but knowing each other would ever really bring them together.

Win, you are so like your father, said Mrs. Thayne affectionately. Your minds work alike. I find I'm growing to depend more and more upon your judgment.

In the dusk Mrs. Thayne could not see the flush that spread over her son's thin face. To be likened in any way to Captain Thayne was praise indeed for Win.

I only wish I could take more off your shoulders, Mother, he said briefly, instead of being a great lazy lump that the whole family has to take thought for.

Here's Annette with letters, said Mrs. Thayne. Why, I did not expect mail until tomorrow.

Some moments passed until Win was aroused from his own correspondence by a sudden surprised exclamation from his mother.

Never say you don't believe in special providences. This seems almost incredible, but here is a note from Mrs. Aldrich, written from London! She's come over to attend some charity congress and wants me to run up for a few days.

Then it is meant that you should, Mother, said Win, smiling. That coincidence hasn't happened for nothing. You can tell her about the girls much more convincingly than it could be written, and bring her back with you to see them. It will all be natural and Estelle will never suspect.

I'll do it, said Mrs. Thayne, but the next second a shadow crossed her face. Her sharp−eyed son instantly saw and interpreted.

I'll not overdo, Mother, he said immediately. Trust me to rival the sloth in idleness. I promise you that I won't stir one step out of my usual routine.

But there's Roger, mused his mother.

Oh, Roger is walking the straight and narrow path of virtue. Ever since ex−scoutmaster Bill Fish rescued him from a desert island, he's been meekness itself. Makes me smile to see his star−eyed devotion. This plan is too evidently designed, for you to give it the cold shoulder.

It does seem so, agreed his mother. Well, I'll go by Saturday's boat. Win, don't you think it would be best not to say anything to Fran and Roger? We will tell them after I have seen Carrie.

I certainly do, Win declared. Fran couldn't keep that secret one half day. It wouldn't interest the kid.

The absence of the family did not prevent Win's enjoyment of the Manor library and during his mother's stay in London, he paid it several visits. Evidently the servants had been instructed to expect and make him welcome, should he appear, for a smiling face answered his ring and the fire in the library was invariably lighted on his arrival. But Win's conscience would not allow him to neglect Roger even for these delightful hours of solitude, so this pleasure was only occasional.

With the pony and gingle they explored many of the lovely Jersey lanes and headlands, for driving seldom tired Win. Half a morning passed in this fascinating occupation left Roger ready to spend the time before luncheon in preparing his lessons. When they were over in the afternoon, Mr. Fisher usually suggested kicking football on the beach or led Roger a walk sufficiently strenuous to leave him disposed for a quiet evening. Estelle and Nurse both thought Roger good as gold, and did not realize how much of his virtue was due to the forethought of brother and tutor.

One morning Estelle had errands in town and invited Roger to go with her. Hearing his joyful acceptance, Win as gladly betook himself to the Manor.

Spring was far advanced now, potatoes were being planted and other early vegetables already showing in green rows. Under the trees on the Manor grounds wild snow−drops starred the grass. Win wandered into the formal garden enclosed by a hedge of box so clipped as to form a solid wall with square pillars topped by round balls of living green. In the background posed two peacocks, also clipped from box. What patience, time and care had been required to bring that hedge to such perfection! Early roses were now plentiful and as Win sauntered through their fragrant mazes, he realized how much loving thought had been expended through the centuries on this old garden. Sad indeed that the present owner of Laurel Manor was the last Richard Lisle.

Win's reverie was broken by the passing of Pierre, with a pleasant *Bon jour, M'sieur,* and a touch of his cap. Pierre carried a rope and crowbar, unusual implements for a gardener's assistant.

Win watched him idly down the laurel−bordered drive and then went into the library, followed by Tylo, who seemed depressed in the absence of his mistress.

About eleven, Win was visited by Yvonne, bringing a glass of milk and a plate of biscuit, which she placed beside him with a politely murmured M'sieur labors so diligently!

Thank you, Yvonne, said Win. It's good of you to bring that. Do you know when the Colonel and Miss Connie are expected?

No word since they arrived at Paris, replied Yvonne in her daintily accented English.

It is Pierre who hears from M'sieur Max, a letter, brief indeed, but explicit, that certain matters may arrange themselves in readiness for the coming of M'sieur Max.

Win looked puzzled. For a second Yvonne stood regarding him, her head slightly on one side.

Word will perhaps arrive on the morrow, she volunteered. Is the milk to M'sieur's liking?

Very much. Thank you, Yvonne.

The trim little maid replenished the fire, replaced a daffodil fallen from a vase, patted Tylo, gave him a biscuit and vanished as noiselessly as she came.

Left alone, Win began to walk slowly up and down the library, wondering about the matters which were to arrange themselves. The tools Pierre carried, the direction in which he was walking, to Win's alert mind suggested the Manor cave. Had Max told Pierre to complete clearing away that heap of stones and if so, why?

Never in his life had Win been so tempted to break his word. In spite of the voluntary promise to his mother to do nothing in the least unusual, it seemed as though he *must* go and see what was taking place in the cave.

Pierre would help me up, he told himself.

Yes, came the instant answer, but Roger gave you all the help he could and yet you were in bed two days and felt ill for a week.

Win thought of questioning Pierre, but abandoned the idea as not quite on the level. A note from Max had come on yesterday's steamer presumably in company with the directions to Pierre. There was not a word in it about the cave and if the writer had wanted Win to know what was going on, he would have told him. No, Win's code of honor would not permit him to find out by asking Pierre. And yet two weeks until Easter!

Win gave a long whistle, looked wistfully down to the sea and again took up his book.

When he returned for luncheon at Rose Villa, he found Roger convulsing Frances by his account of the morning spent in town with Estelle.

It's lucky I don't have to do the marketing for this family, he announced. If you wanted cream now, where would you get it?

A dairy, of course, or a market, replied Frances.

Wrong. Much cream you'd get! Try a fish−monger's.

At Roger's disgusted tone, Fran giggled, Oh, I've learned a lot, he went on. Where would you ask for one of those paper patterns to cut out a dress?

A dry−goods store, answered his sister.

Do say a draper's if that is what you mean, continued Roger. You would only waste time. Go to a book−shop.

I will, said Fran. Thanks for the tip.

I wanted to get weighed, said Roger, because I know I am becoming a shadow studying so hard. I asked Miss Estelle where to go and told her I didn't think the nickel−in−the−slot machines were very accurate Well, what's wrong with that?

Roger stopped for both Win and Frances were laughing at him.

Here you are knocking English customs, said Win at last. As though Miss Estelle knew what a nickel was, let alone a slot machine, although I have seen some of them.

I don't see anything so funny, said Roger huffily. Perhaps she didn't know, but she was polite enough not to laugh and said the place to get weighed was the hair−dresser's

Oh, come off, said Win. That's too much, even for us.

Well, it is where we went and where the scales were, retorted Roger, but there weren't any pounds to it, only what they call stones. I weigh exactly seven stone and I won't tell you how many pounds that is.

Ninety−eight, said Win so promptly that Roger looked disconcerted.

How did you know? he demanded.

From a book, replied his brother. A little article that you don't yet value as highly as you might. What next?

Oh, that was about all, said Roger, except that Miss Estelle told me I might choose some crackers, I mean biscuit, and to buy half a kilo. I forgot and asked for half a litre and the clerk grinned very disagreeably.

Liquid measure instead of dry, commented Win in amusement. After luncheon, Roger, permit me to introduce you to some parts of your arithmetic that you have evidently never examined. But go on.

Then I stopped to look in a window and hurried to catch Miss Estelle and ran into a big fat man who was wearing stiff leather gaiters and a tam o' shanter. We came together rather hard, admitted Roger. I didn't hurt myself much because he was quite soft, but his tam fell off and he said, 'Bless my soul, by George!

Roger, I can't stand any more, implored Frances.

I don't follow the logic of that hair−dresser and the scales, mused Win, when he had stopped laughing. Is it before and after a hair−cut or to see how much flesh the barber gouges out in a shave?

Give it up, said Fran. There's the gong for luncheon and Edith bringing the mail. I hope there's a letter from mother.

There is, said Edith.

Please excuse me, Miss Estelle, if I read it now, begged Frances, settling into her seat at the table.

Of course, dear, was the reply as Estelle took Mrs. Thayne's usual place, for she and Edith were having their meals with the young people.

Now, Roger, pause, exclaimed Win, suddenly. What are you going to do with that? he added, as the attention of all was concentrated on the surprised Roger who sat with arrested hand suspending above his plate a spoon heaped with sugar.

Whatever is he doing? protested Estelle gently. Such a mixture! How can he eat sugar on his eggs?

Thought it was pancakes, explained Roger, indicating the omelet before him, but relinquishing the sugar.

Mother's coming on Wednesday, Frances announced happily. And she's met a friend in London, Mrs. Aldrich, who's coming with her for a few days. Isn't that splendid, boys? You'll like her, Miss Estelle. She's sweet.

I shall be glad to see any friend of your mother's, said Estelle cordially. Looking to see whether Roger was sufficiently supplied with butter, she did not notice the smile with which Win glanced at her.

CHAPTER XXI. THE TWO CHAINS

Estelle, will you do me a favor? asked Mrs. Thayne, following her young landlady into the hall. The travelers from London had just arrived and in the drawing−room, Mrs. Aldrich was expatiating to the boys upon the roughness of the trip.

Why, of course I will! You don't need to ask, replied Estelle affectionately.

You and Edith have been taking your meals with the children during my absence. Please keep on doing it. Let us all be one family for the rest of our stay.

It is lovely of you to want us, Mrs. Thayne, said Estelle, her face flushing. We stopped with the children because I thought it would be better and then I could personally see that they had all they wanted. But now that you have a guest

I want you and Mrs. Aldrich to know each other, said Mrs. Thayne quickly. And this will be one of the easiest ways to get acquainted.

I think Mrs. Aldrich is charming, remarked Estelle. Isn't it odd, how sometimes a likeness in a total stranger strikes one? For a second, just as you introduced us, she reminded me so much of my dear mother that I could hardly pull myself together to speak. She must have thought me quite awkward.

I know she didn't, said Mrs. Thayne, with difficulty keeping her face under control. She had seen Estelle start and noticed her amazed expression when Mrs. Aldrich greeted her. So Estelle had not been conscious of Mrs. Aldrich's constrained manner! Then you will have luncheon with us? she added.

I will since you wish it, replied Estelle, vanishing to give directions to Nurse.

Now, what is there to do this morning? Mrs. Aldrich was asking the boys. I propose to stay in this island exactly one week. Your mother was seasick so she ought to lie down and rest but I feel as fit as a fiddle. Frances is at school, you tell me. No, I don't want to drive this morning. Suppose you take me for a short walk, Roger and Win, and show me what is to be seen on the beach.

We might take you to Noirmont Point, suggested Roger as they stopped at the end of the terrace to look at the view which was never twice the same. What are those big vessels over beyond Castle Elizabeth?

They are English warships, replied Mrs. Aldrich. Coming into the harbor we passed close to them. The captain said it was a part of the Channel squadron, whatever that is.

Oh, did you see their names? demanded Roger eagerly, as he counted the great gray ships in the offing. Fourteen, no, fifteen.

Only a few. One was the *Princess Royal* and I saw the *Thunderer*, the *Revenge*, the *Black Prince* and the *Camperdown*.

Roger's eyes opened at this list of awe−inspiring names. I wish we could get over to Elizabeth, he remarked. We could see them better then.

Tide's not right, said Win, casting a critical glance at the sea.

What, to walk over to that island? asked Mrs. Aldrich. Is it ever possible?

We've been over, said Roger. When the tide is 'way out, there is a raised causeway, quite smooth and easy.

What is the place anyway? asked Mrs. Aldrich, looking curiously across to the castle.

Once it was an old abbey, Win explained, dedicated to St. Elericus, the patron saint of Jersey. I suppose the town was named for him.

How did the island itself get its name? inquired Mrs. Aldrich. The derivation of these charming old English names is a fascinating study.

It was the old Roman Caesarea, said Win. Jersey is a corruption of that. The ruined hermitage of St. Elericus is still over near Elizabeth, at least they call it that, though it's a kind of combination of a watch−tower and a cave. But the castle, as it stands, was built when Edward VI was king of England. There's a story to the effect that all the bells in the island except one for each of the twelve churches were seized by royal authority and ordered sold to help pay for building the castle. They were shipped to St. Malo and expected to bring a high price, but the vessel went down on the way and all the good church people thought it was because of sacrilege in taking those bells.

What is the castle used for now? inquired Mrs. Aldrich.

Barracks, replied Roger. The place is full of soldiers. It's no good now as a fortification, because Fort Regent up above St. Helier's over there on the cliffs could knock Castle Elizabeth and all those warships into fits in no time. Nothing can enter the bay if the Fort Regent guns don't approve. And that heap of rocks where Elizabeth stands is 'most a mile around, it is, honest. Fran and Edith and I walked it.

They say, said Win, that the space between the castle and the town was once a meadow. For that matter, they also say that the whole channel between here and France was once so narrow that the Bishop of Coutances used to cross to Jersey on a plank.

Tell that to the marines, protested Roger. You do find the weirdest yarns in those books you're always grubbing in.

Oh, I can tell a bigger one than that, said Win laughing, but perhaps you'll swallow it because your friend Bill told it to me. He said that some time in the sixteenth century there was an abnormally low tide, lower than any one had ever known. Some fishermen who happened to be out between Orgueil and the coast of France came in and reported that they had distinctly seen down in the channel the towers and streets and houses of an old town, forty feet or more under water.

There are stories like that in Brittany, said Mrs. Aldrich. The fishermen declare that they can hear the tolling of the submerged church bells. Now, when legends like that exist on both sides of a channel, it stands to reason that there is likely some foundation in truth.

Then why don't they send divers down to find out? demanded Roger bluntly. Any enterprising country would.

We'll import a few Americans to do the investigating, laughed Mrs. Aldrich. Is this Frances coming? Who is with her?

Edith, replied Win. Miss Estelle's sister.

Bless me! murmured Mrs. Aldrich. The other was startling enough but this resemblance is even stronger.

Win smiled. It was great fun to look on, knowing what he did of his mother's innocent little conspiracy, all the more fun because the other young people were unsuspecting.

At luncheon, where Estelle appeared with a pretty dignity, Win was supplied with still more secret amusement. Mrs. Aldrich talked a good deal, rather inconsequently at times, but continually looked from one sister to the other in a way that would have aroused suspicion had either the slightest idea that any plot was on foot. As it was, Win saw Estelle occasionally glancing at their guest in a puzzled manner as though trying to account for something she found unexpected. After the meal he waylaid his mother.

What is Mrs. Aldrich going to do? he asked laughingly. I had hard work not to give myself away during luncheon. You looked so unnatural, Mother, that if you hadn't been seasick, Fran and Roger would have caught on. As it was, they thought you weren't quite rested.

I don't know what she is going to do, replied his mother, but it is working as we hoped. She is strongly attracted to the girls, and Estelle confided to me that our guest in some unaccountable way, reminded her of her mother. We have done our part in bringing Carrie here; it is for her to take the next step. I rather imagine that she won't be able to hold in very much longer, though I think she is enjoying the situation.

It was not until dinner of her third day in St. Aubin's, that Mrs. Aldrich made herself known. To please Win, who had ascertained that she chanced to have the old chain with her, she wore it when she entered the dining−room.

Win watched Estelle intently, disappointed that she did not immediately notice the ornament. Indeed, they were finishing dessert before anything happened. Perhaps purposely, Mrs. Aldrich looked at her watch and Fran in all innocence touched the match that fired the explosion.

Why, how odd! she exclaimed. Miss Estelle has a chain just like that one, Mrs. Aldrich.

Win and his mother exchanged a glance; the others naturally looked at the chain.

It's precisely like it, Sister, said Edith, who sat near Mrs. Aldrich. Isn't that queer?

It's an old keepsake, said Mrs. Aldrich with deliberation. It belonged to my mother. See, here are her initials on the slide, E. A. for Emma Avery.

Edith looked with interest but Estelle turned pale. Thoughtful Win pushed a glass of water within reach.

Star's has initials too, Edith remarked innocently. A. A., I think they are. Anyway, it was Grandmother's chain.

Mrs. Aldrich turned to Estelle, who perfectly colorless, was staring at her. Child, she said rather peremptorily, come up to my room and let us compare these old trinkets.

Still speechless, Estelle mechanically arose. Amid dead silence the two left the dining−room. Fran turned to her mother, amazed at the look of excited pleasure on her face. What *does* it all mean? she demanded. Is it a secret?

Just a mild little conspiracy, replied Mrs. Thayne. What it means, is that Mrs. Aldrich was your mother's first cousin, Edith, so she is your and Estelle's second cousin. Just by chance I guessed from Estelle's unusual chain that the one Carrie Aldrich wears came from the same source. When Estelle told me that her great−grandfather gave one to each of his two daughters, the whole thing flashed on me.

But that, said Edith, with her sweet childish faith, is a miracle.

Perhaps, smiled Mrs. Thayne. I only know that we shall leave St. Aubin's happier because you and Mrs. Aldrich have found each other out.

A shower of eager questions fell from Frances and Roger but a long time passed before anything was seen of Estelle and Mrs. Aldrich. When they reappeared to the group awaiting them in the drawing− room, Estelle had plainly been crying and Mrs. Aldrich's eyes looked suspiciously red.

Come and kiss me, Edith, she said. I want to be Cousin Carrie from now on. Yes, Estelle, she does look more like the Averys than you, though I saw the resemblance in your face also.

Isn't the whole thing just like a story? Frances confided to her mother at bed−time. What do you think will happen now?

I don't know, admitted Mrs. Thayne. Estelle is so very proud that it will be hard for her to accept help from any one, but Carrie will arrange things if it can be done. I know that Estelle has been dreadfully worried because some of the little money her father left her has been lost through an imprudent investment and that she has not felt sure she could manage to keep the house through another season. And yet she must find some way of supporting herself and Edith. Things will work themselves out, for Carrie is perfectly capable of inventing some very necessary work for Estelle to do, which will preserve her self−respect and let Carrie have her way. I think Carrie usually has some young person acting as secretary and Estelle could do that easily. I am not at all worried about the future since Estelle fortunately saw the resemblance to her own mother in Mrs. Aldrich. I imagine that will make it easier for her to consider whatever plan is proposed.

Wasn't it lucky that we came here! sighed Frances. And doesn't it seem odd that we did come, just because Roger and I wanted to take that little train the first day and chanced to find Rose Villa? If it hadn't been for that, we might not have looked for lodgings in St. Aubin's at all, nor known Miss Estelle and Edith. Why, Mother! she went on, with intenser surprise in her voice. It's just like the House that Jack built. If we hadn't come here, we wouldn't have met the beach dog, nor known Miss Connie, nor visited the Manor, nor be hunting for the Spanish chest!

Fran stopped, looking so comically aghast that Mrs. Thayne laughed as she kissed her.

So much depended upon a passing wish to take that little train! It is remarkable on looking back, to realize how often life turns upon some apparently trivial incident, some insignificant choice.

It's time though, that we went home, Mother, said Frances merrily. While you were in London, Miss Estelle wanted change for half a crown, so I tipped the money out of my purse. One piece rolled on the floor and Roger picked it up, and said: 'Why, this isn't a shilling! What is it?' So I took it, and, Mother, both of us looked at it hard for several seconds before we realized that it was a United States quarter−dollar! Don't you think it is time that we went home?

CHAPTER XXII. THE CHEST ITSELF

Mrs. Aldrich's stay did not exceed her limit of a week, but she left for London with Estelle's willing promise to come to her when the Thaynes returned to Boston and leaving behind her two girls with gladdened hearts. After her departure Win's interest was again concentrated on the coming of the Manor family and the search for the Spanish chest.

Twice as he came or went from his visits to the library, he saw Pierre in the distance, once actually disappearing over the cliff edge, but Easter was close at hand when Yvonne, bringing the usual lunch, volunteered the information that the Colonel, Miss Connie and Mr. Max were expected on Saturday's steamer.

Win reported this news with joy and when the day arrived the young people began to watch for the Granville boat hours before she could possibly arrive, hoping to distinguish familiar figures on the deck. To their disappointment, when the steamer was finally detected in the distance, dusk was at hand.

I shall do it! said Roger firmly. There are three packages and we may not be in England on the Fourth of July. Besides I forgot it on Washington's birthday.

Fran and Win looked after him in amazement as he suddenly tore back to the house and rushed upstairs, spreading noise on his way and devastation in his room, where he jerked the very vitals out of his steamer trunk, scattering its contents to the four corners.

Nor was Edith enlightened when Roger reappeared with a pasteboard tube in one hand, and a box of matches in the other, but Win laughed and Frances gave a shriek of delight.

Bed fire! she exclaimed. Oh, Roger, I never knew you had it. Do wait until the boat is a little nearer.

It will be darker, too, Win advised. Make more of a show if you wait.

I only hope they will know it is for them, said Roger anxiously.

They'll see where it comes from and perhaps they'll understand, said Win. But don't expect the steamer to salute as one at home would.

At the proper second, a flare of red illuminated the end of Noirmont Terrace, greatly amazing not only St. Aubin's staid population but such inhabitants of St. Helier's as chanced to be on the water front, and affording Roger two full moments of complete and exquisite satisfaction.

Real United States! he said. I suppose an English boat doesn't know enough to whistle

Roger stopped with his mouth open. From the *Alouette* came two distinct blasts of the steam siren.

Oh, that's Mr. Max, burst out Win in delight. He's been in America and understands the etiquette of red fire. And you remember he said he knew personally all the captains on the Channel boats. Probably he went up to the bridge and got somebody to acknowledge our salute! Isn't that simply corking of him?

That was surely meant for us, agreed the pleased Frances. Oh, how long shall we have to wait before we see them?

That very evening Pierre brought a note from Constance, expressing appreciative thanks for their fiery welcome, the source of which Max had guessed and which he had easily induced Captain Lefevre to acknowledge. The note ended with an invitation to tea on Monday and promised a solution of some kind to Win's theories concerning the Spanish chest.

How nice of Miss Connie to set the very first possible day, said Frances. I suppose we shall not see them before then.

Not unless we go to the little old church tomorrow, replied her brother. If you want to, and it's a still day, we might get up there.

But the travelers had returned on an evening of clouds and threatening winds. Easter Sunday dawned with Jersey in the grip of a terrific southeast storm. All day the rain beat on the panes of Rose Villa, all day the wind howled and snatched at the shutters, the house at times fairly quivering with its force. As dusk came, the gale increased to the proportions of a hurricane. Roger, going out to the pillar post−box, came struggling back with difficulty.

I met one of the Noirmont fishermen, he reported. He said it is the worst gale in thirty years and when the weather clears the surf will be worth seeing.

Fisher told me that a southeast storm kicked up a fine sea, replied Win. I only hope it won't stop our going to the Manor to−morrow.

All night the wind raged though the rain finally ceased. It seemed as though the reputed witches of Jersey were holding high carnival with the unloosed elements of air and water. Day broke, still without rain, but the violence of the wind was not lessened. Roger ran out to the end of the terrace and came hurrying back.

Come out, everybody, and look, he shouted above the uproar. The waves are coming over the breakwater. There isn't one inch of beach to be seen.

Roger's report was literally true. Though the sea wall protecting the town of St. Helier's rose twenty−five feet above the sands, the rollers were breaking beyond the wall on the esplanade itself, the white foam even running up some of the side streets. Only an inky howling mass of white−capped water stretched between the town and Elizabeth Castle.

Win, who had managed to make slow progress to a point of vantage, stood fascinated by the wild whirl of wind and water. The tide was at the flood and the spectacle at its finest. Just a few moments sufficed to lessen its grandeur as the waves, yielding to the law of their being, were dragged away from the land. Presently, instead of dashing over the wall, they broke against it, and then came a scene of different interest. The water, forcibly striking the masonry, was flung back on the next incoming roller, with a collision that sent spray forty feet into the air from the violence of the shock. This phenomenon was repeated as the rollers crashed down the curve of the wall, continuing for its full length, the flying spray looking like consecutive puffs of steam from a locomotive.

Look, there comes the train from St. Helier's! exclaimed Roger, dancing excitedly about. Doesn't it look as though the ocean was trying to catch it?

The little train had prudently delayed its starting until after the turn of the tide. As it crept slowly around the curve of the breakwater, great white tongues of foam constantly shot over the wall like fingers frantically trying to seize and draw it into the sea. But always the hands fell back baffled, to the accompaniment of a roar that sounded almost like human disappointment. The train reached St. Aubin's dripping with salt water.

Five stones are torn out of the coping in the wall, reported Roger, coming back from his inspection of the adventurous little engine. The guard says they are sweeping pebbles and stones by the ton out of the streets beyond the esplanade. And coming down here, he twice had a barrel of water slapped right at him. He is as wet as a drowned rat.

The surf must be wonderful at Corbiere, said Estelle. They say there is an undertow off that point which produces something this effect of the water flung back by the wall.

Why, here's Miss Connie! exclaimed Frances in excitement. Max and Constance on horseback were coming down the terrace.

We've been half round the island, Connie announced after her first greetings. Well prepared for wind as they were, both looked disheveled. Connie's hair was braided in a thick club down her back, evidently the only way she could keep it under control; Max's was plastered back by wind and spray, for he had lost his hat, and their horses were blown and spattered with salt brine.

Oh, but it is grand! Constance went on. Corbiere light is smothered in spray to the very top of the tower. We haven't had a storm like this since I was a tiny kiddie.

To talk above the uproar of the surf was difficult. Asking them to be at the Manor promptly by three, the two rode away.

Why three? asked Frances as they regained the shelter of the house.

I think we are going down into the cave, said Win happily. Mr. Max told me just now that we were to begin exploring there and that things would be arranged so that it would not be hard for me. I suppose he and Pierre have some plan.

But you aren't going into the cave on a day like this? exclaimed Mrs. Thayne, quite horrified at this announcement.

Why, yes, Mother, said Win. The tide will be as low as usual when it does ebb.

Of course, assented his mother. I forgot. But how about this wind? You must have the pony, Win.

I will if it keeps up, but I imagine the gale will blow itself out by noon.

Win's prophecy proved correct. When the four started to keep their engagement, the wind was greatly abated and the only trace of the tempest was the ruined vines and gardens that marked their road. At the Manor gates, Colonel Lisle, Constance and Max met them.

It is to be the cave, Connie said gayly. Max has things all mapped out for us.

Arrived at the cliff, the party stopped. Marks of the storm were visible in one or two landslides and in a great amount of debris strewing the uncovered beach and rocks. Even large stones seemed to have been displaced.

Max looked rather serious as he saw so much change in conditions usually stable. I think you'd better let me go down and report whether matters are as I expect, he said. There seems to have been considerable doing in this vicinity last evening.

Let us wait, Win, said Constance quickly. No use in going down until we see how he finds things.

Colonel Lisle also elected to await the report, but Roger and the girls accompanied Max. They were gone almost half an hour and the watchers on the cliff were beginning to wonder what had happened. When they did appear, they called to the others not to come.

'The best laid plans of mice and men!' sighed Max as he reached the top of the cliff. Uncle, the storm has picked up all the stones I had Pierre clear out of the tunnel and wedged them in tight again like a cork in a bottle.

There was a passage and we can't get into it? demanded Win eagerly, his face reflecting the disappointment visible on the faces of the other young people.

There was, replied Max, looking at him sympathetically, not merely into another cave but striking inland. Pierre cleared its mouth and reported it passable for fifty feet. Beyond that he did not go. Now, it is stopped as tight as ever. This shows, Uncle, how it came to be lost to the recollection of everybody about the Manor.

Yes, said Colonel Lisle. Very likely it was stopped by a similar storm a century or more ago. So far as I know there has never been a legend of any tunnel. But, Max, he added, there is yet the cellar where you and Win have decided that the passage enters the house.

May we knock a hole there? Max asked quickly. Win had said nothing more but his disappointment was evident.

Certainly, if you like, assented the Colonel, smiling. Only be prepared for another disillusion when you get the wall down. The existence of the tunnel doesn't ensure that of the chest.

Max whistled, evidently a signal, for Pierre promptly appeared with a rope over his shoulder.

We sha'n't need that now, said Max. He proceeded to add some rapid directions in French. Pierre nodded, grinned cheerfully and set off at a fast pace.

I've told him to get another man and come to knock in the vault wall, Max explained as they started toward the Manor. We may not get it down this afternoon, but that's all that's left to try. I'm beastly annoyed about that tiresome hole. Why should a ripsnorter of a storm come on the one day when it could spoil our plans?

It's provoking. agreed Win. Do you suppose there is really anything in the passage?

Blessed if I know! replied Max. The one thing sure is that there is a passage. There must be since we located one end of it in the cave. If it hadn't been for that, we might not be permitted to tear down the wall, but even Uncle is convinced now that the tunnel exists.

Come and have tea, said Connie as they reached the Manor. It's a bit early, but we may as well begin, for nobody knows how long it will take to pierce the vault.

Max went down to show the men where to work and reported that the stone seemed soft and inclined to break easily. This isn't going to be much of a job, he reported. I told Pierre to send word as soon as he struck through.

What do you suppose the chest will look like? asked Frances. Will it be silver?

No such luck, Max replied. Possibly metal, probably wood, always provided that we find it.

You mustn't throw cold water, Max, reproved Connie from behind the tea−table. Since we have found the passage, why not the chest? Let's have it a gorgeous one while we are about it, gold studded with uncut rubies and the Spanish crown in diamonds.

Frances and Edith shrieked at thought of such sumptuousness and one by one each expressed an opinion as to what the box would resemble and its probable contents. Roger decided that the chest was of solid iron, fastened by seven locks of which they would have to find the seven keys and that inside would be discovered a complete suit of royal armor.

I fear that Prince Charles would not have made good his escape from England clad in a clanking suit of mail, said the amused Colonel.

Just then Yvonne entered with her usual pretty air of importance. It is Pierre who desires M'sieur to attend in the cellar, she said, addressing herself to Max.

The entire party rose, hastily placing tea−cups on any convenient article of furniture. Roger found the floor most accessible for his, but with prudent foresight took with him such easily conveyed articles as the jam sandwiches and plum cake upon his plate.

Down in the cellar, Pierre and McNeil, the Scotch gardener, stood facing the northern wall just where the newer wing joined the oldest Manor vault. Before them yawned a hole already two feet in diameter.

With a grin on his face, Pierre thrust his crowbar through and showed that a space not quite a yard wide intervened before the tool brought up against what was in reality the outer wall of the cellar. The partition itself was only a foot thick, but because it was of equal thickness throughout its length, Max had not been able to detect any difference in resonance.

Bien, Pierre! exclaimed Max eagerly. *En avant!*

Pierre and McNeil attacked the wall again, Pierre all smiles and gay glances over this remarkable whim of M'sieur Max, whose whims as a rule he found enjoyable; McNeil looking perhaps not grimmer than usual, but as though the whole affair was quite below his dignity. To knock a hole in a perfectly good stone partition which would require a mason to fill and put in proper shape again at an expense of solid Jersey shillings, struck his thrifty Scotch soul as folly. Still, if Colonel Lisle wished to indulge Mr. Max in this youthful eccentricity, it was not McNeil's place to protest.

After fifteen minutes a cavity yawned in the cellar wall, disclosing a passage leading to the left.

That will do, McNeil, said the Colonel. That's enough for the purpose. Go ahead, boys. It was through your efforts that the tunnel was located, so it is for you to see this out.

Win shall be first, said Max. Step in, old fellow.

Pale with excitement, Win took the offered lantern and approached the hole. Once inside the opening he found that he could stand erect for the passage ran straight along the cellar wall about three feet wide and over five feet high. It seemed dry and the air was not musty. Rough stones formed its floor and roof but the crude workmanship had been strong and only a few scattered stones had fallen during the centuries.

Max followed with another lantern, and Roger made the third explorer. The excited heads of the girls were thrust into the passage but only Frances actually stepped within.

Win went slowly down the gently sloping tunnel, and presently the eager watchers who could catch only glimpses of shadowy roof and walls in the fitful light of the lanterns, saw the three stop. In her excitement, Fran forgot her fear of the distance stretching before her and ran to them. The next second came a wild warwhoop from Roger.

It's here! Max called more quietly.

At this wonderful news the rest entered the passage, the Colonel as eager as the others. Fifty feet from the opening at one side of the tunnel was a rough niche or alcove and in it stood a box about two feet square. Upon its cover lay the dust of ages, and it was scarcely to be distinguished in color from the stones about it.

We'll bring it out, Uncle, said Max. No place to open it here. You hold the lanterns, Win. Lend a hand, Roger. Go easy; we don't know how much knocking it will stand.

His eyes almost starting from his head, Roger took one of the handles, the girls stepped back and in two minutes the party stood in the open cellar, looking at what was undoubtedly the Spanish chest.

[Illustration: WHAT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE SPANISH CHEST]

Is it heavy? asked Fran breathlessly, while Pierre went for a brush to remove the silted dust.

Rather, said Max, looking boyishly excited. Ah, now we know the style of the chest. No gold box nor uncut rubies, Connie!

Relieved of its heavy coating of dust, the box proved of dark wood, carefully finished and ornamented by plates and corners of steel. Upon its cover was inlaid a scroll engraved with the Manor arms and the name of Richard Lisle.

Gracious, what great−grandfather bought that bit of bric−a−brac! exclaimed Connie, seeing her father's eyes light with interested pleasure. It must have been the original Richard himself. Is it locked?

Max tried the lid. No, he said, straightening up and looking at the Colonel. It is your play, Uncle Dick. Only a Lisle of Laurel Manor should open Richard's chest.

The Colonel smiled, stepped forward and with his single hand lifted the lid. The excited group about him bent forward eagerly.

At first glance a roll of dark cloth was all that appeared. When Colonel Lisle lifted this, it unfolded into a long−skirted coat ornamented with many buttons. The fabric was stained and rotten, in places moth−eaten. Below the coat lay a pair of leather gloves with long wrists, stiff as boards, and two blackened bits of metal that proved to be spurs.

For a moment no one spoke. The young people were silent, impressed with the fact that long years ago these things had been the property of a prince of England.

With a smile the Colonel looked first at Max and then at Win. Are you satisfied? he asked. Though the contents of the Spanish chest have no value in money, they certainly are rich in historical interest.

Oh, it was the fun of finding it that I cared about, said Win quickly. That was the point for me. And I am so glad there is something in it.

Let's take it up−stairs, suggested Connie. We can see so much better.

The boys and Max delayed to inspect the empty secret passage, following to the spot where it was blocked by its stopper of stone. Then they joined the group in the study. In bright daylight, the fine workmanship on the Toledo steel trimmings of the chest stood out in full beauty.

The design on these buttons is very significant, remarked Colonel Lisle, who was inspecting the wreck of the once handsome coat. And I suspect that they are of silver.

Examination showed on the tarnished metal the three ostrich feathers that have marked the badge of the Prince of Wales since the far−off days of Edward the Black Prince. Below was the motto, Ich dien, and the single letter C.

On my next new suit I guess I'll have buttons marked R, said Roger solemnly.

The others laughed. A feeling of real awe had been creeping over them to think that garment had once been worn by Prince Charles.

Here's a loose button, said Max, picking it out of the box. The whole coat is falling in pieces.

The buttons will last indefinitely, said Colonel Lisle, regarding thoughtfully the one Max had just rescued. Thanks to Win's clever brain, the Manor has acquired an unsuspected secret passage and a valuable antique; of especial value to me because of the name it bears. I want you to keep this button, Win, for I think you, almost more than any one I know, will appreciate it and what it stands for.

Win turned pale. To possess a silver button once the property of bonnie Prince Charlie rendered him speechless.

Oh, Colonel Lisle, he said after a minute, I oughtn't to take a thing of such value. It belongs here.

I want you to have it, my boy, replied the Colonel kindly. I really am indebted to you, for we have positive proof now that the Manor walls once sheltered the Prince.

I should value that button above all things, said Win simply, if you really wish me to have it. Only it seems as though Mr. Max had done much more toward solving the mystery.

I merely followed the lead you gave me, said Max, who was looking at him with a very friendly expression. You played a pretty fine game yourself, Win.

As for that, said the Colonel smiling, Maxfield may have a button too, if he cares for it.

Thank you, Uncle Dick, Max replied promptly. I do value it, but perhaps for the present, it would better stop with the others.

As Max spoke, he looked not at the Colonel but at Constance, leaning against the table beside him. Something in their attitude struck Win's always acute perception. For the first time he doubted whether the young people of the

Manor had been as genuinely absorbed in that search as he supposed. About Max, half− sitting on the corner of the study table, about Connie, with her hands loosely clasped before her, there was a certain air of quiet detachment, as of those who politely look on at some interesting comedy, but who, as soon as courtesy permits, will return to affairs of more importance.

You need not have the least scruple about accepting it, Win, the Colonel went on. We hope this will not be your last visit to the island, but in any case, whenever you look at that old relic, you will have to give us a thought as well.

Win turned the tarnished button on his palm. Yes, the sight of it would always bring back memories of the green lanes, the red cliffs, the turquoise sea of Jersey, not least the hours in the library, the Spanish chest and the Lisles of Laurel Manor.

* * * * *

AFTERWORD

After the story was finished and the characters were going away, Max and Connie turned back.

We have kept our promise? they asked. We have played quite nicely and haven't been silly?

You have really been very good, admitted the author. If Max hadn't appeared just when he did to rescue Edith and Frances from the tide, probably the story must have stopped there. And Connie has been most helpful about lending the Manor house and the beach dog.

May we play again? Max asked.

I think not, decided the author. This is five months later. You really must be grown−up now and stay so.

We have been all the time, said Connie. We've pretended just to please you. But since you let us come into the story when we weren't expected nor invited, it is only polite to tell you what we are going to do now.

They looked at each other and smiled.

Every girl who reads this story will want to know, Connie went on. It would indeed be very diverting to be Princess Santo−Ponte, but somehow I think the chances of 'living happily ever after' are greater with Max. There's nothing at all romantic about marrying Max, but you might just mention that I'm going to do it.

THE END.